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CHAPTER I.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(First Night continued.)

I CAN scarce recall from the past, all the kindness I received at this good man's hands. Faithful to the salt he had eaten in my father's house, he alike disregarded trouble and annoyance, and treated me affectionately even when my whims and fancies required all his patience to support him against them. I was stubborn to a degree, which he checked with such prudential control, that ere he was taken from my sight, this fault was completely cured. But above all, my future welfare was his chief desire, the happiness of a future world alone remained for him to rest his hopes upon, and how could I ex-

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pect otherwise, than that he should be more pressing with me upon such subjects, than I either then relished or thought needful. "Remember, my son," he often said, "and reflect on the holy religion you have embraced, and been born under the happy influence of. As the apple of the eye is the light of the body, so is a strong belief in religion, the light of the mind. As the sun turns the darkness into naught, and enables mankind to pursue with vigour, worldly occupation and enjoyment, guiding the traveller onward with safety, so will the blessings of unalterable faith in God, and his Holy Prophet, Mahomet, irradiate the darkness of despair, and finally guide you to unutterable bliss. As regards your stay in this ever unquiet and changing world, remember that an honest contentment will suffice to enhance the gifts of prosperity, whilst an untamed thirst for fame and aggrandisement, will meet its just reward, in disappointment and vexation.

How many have I not seen hurled from the loftiest pinnacle of greatness they could aspire to, even although only just attained, after years of

toil and trouble. One still greater yet remained to check their daring aspirations, and teach them that the greatest honours of this world, are but as the sands of the desert, now heaped upon this spot, and now blown or dispersed elsewhere. No, my son, be it a cot or a palace, rest not your search for happiness upon such fragile props, but seek more sure and certain pleasure, in communing with Allah, repressing ambition, and chasing to a distance those avaricious and selfish ideas of greatness, which, when fostered, only disease the mind they inhabit." Thus pleasingly would he endeavour to direct my footsteps in the paths of instruction, and try to lighten the burthen of acquiring knowledge to youth, of its most appalling and discouraging appearances. Whatever he stated, was accompanied with a satisfactory reason, as pleasing to dwell upon, as strictly illustrative of the matter at issue. Again, he soothed down the feelings of the student with the antidote of friendship, insomuch so, that to have displeased him, would have been an unpleasant task, even for my youthful feelings. The learning acquired under the auspices of this

good man's tuition, was all the education I ever received, and that too, at the most important period of my life. If he had then, as so frequently occurs, adopted harsh measures, and made his instructions to me as unpleasant to receive, as severely imposed, what might not have been the result! As he managed it, however, it formed a good groundwork on which to improve, and prepare for any future occupation I might have occasion to pursue, and before the aid of his counsel was for ever removed from me, I had acquired sufficient insight into the nature and extensive power of the Persian language, to enable me, if I wished it, to cultivate its study with success.

“Before the age of fourteen, I was accustomed to, and proficient in, all the manly, athletic exercises common to persons of my age. I could wield a spear adroitly, and seldom failed to hit the mark, when mounted on my steed at full gallop, destined to receive the ball from my match-lock. I could mount and dismount from my horse, when at his fullest speed, and even turn completely round on my saddle, as prac-

tised in the event of pursuit; which gives an inexperienced youth every advantage over a heated foe, whom victory has rendered heedless. Often has it proved of essential service to me; nay, I have repeatedly, when I found it impossible to make my weapon penetrate the quilted jacket of my opponent, lured him on, by pretended flight, turned suddenly, and shot him. These youthful pastimes are sometimes most useful, Saheb, said the old man, turning to me, and casting a significant glance at the moonshee, at the same moment. But to resume, he added, on few occasions were my village companions able to find an assailable point, when parrying with the shield, was the amusement of the moment; and if the Bheel bow was practising amongst us, I generally maintained a superiority in accuracy, of aim, and outvied the attempts of others to send their arrows to a greater distance than my own. In short, I was the acknowledged Rustum* of our society, and, as such, had but little need to check, by chastisement, any impertinence on the

* *Rustum*,—a fabulous person, like Hercules.

part of the members who composed it, for such was seldom adopted in their conduct towards me. In this respect, how much depends upon ourselves. In all situations of life, open but the way to friendship too easily, and familiarity, which ends in quarrelling, is engendered. If to day you allow your servant or abdar to neglect cooling your water, to morrow he will even fail to fill the vessels with it. If this time is passed by unheeded, when your khansaman* has touched your carpet with his shoes, be not surprised if to-morrow you find him reclining upon your ottoman, encompassed with your cushions. No, once display proper firmness, and all those minions who otherwise would dispute with you, and put you to inconvenience, will keep their proper stations, at least I have found it so. It was about this period, that misfortune made the first encroachments on my feelings. The earliest shock the buoyant light-heartedness of my youth suffered from, was in being deprived of the old Moollah, may peace be with him, whom age

† *Khansaman*.—Equal to head servant.

and infirmity at last subdued, and he bent his face towards paradise, after taking a most affectionate and agonising farewell of my father, his family, and myself: grouped around him, to witness his fleeting spirit depart in peace, we were in that awful suspense, which a certain knowledge of the hour for hope having passed by, never fails to create. "Approach, my son," said the old man, with a faltering voice, "and receive the benediction of one, who sincerely loves you, now fast closing his eyes upon this world, without repining. What do we here leave, Rustum, but endless woe and misery? To-day fortune smiles upon his favourites, only that in wrecking their happiness, to morrow, the curse may be the greater. We hourly seek for pleasure, and anticipate what we suppose will yield it with delight. We then grasp the fancied chimera, and reap but bitterness. My strength, however, fails me, think not I deplore my situation, but regard the lessons I have endeavoured to give you, in hopes of your profiting by them, and may they ameliorate the bitter hours imposed upon the state of man. Accept this token of my affection—here is my

Koran, blessed be the sacred book. Take it, peruse it carefully, and may it prove to you what it has to me, a fountain of comfort in the desert of affliction.

“Farewell, my son, farewell once more,” he faintly articulated, and then all was past; the fatal moment had arrived, and I lost one whose generous, manly disposition had won my youthful heart. I have forgotten to state before, that at the time of my birth, certain calculations were made by several astrologers, and the hour of my nativity was found under favourable auspices, that predicted unusual good fortune, and prosperity for a time. This, however, it was to be feared, was only for a period; my life was not to be wholly exempt from severe privations. Some days before the fondly anticipated hour of my nativity, my mother—may her name be ever praised—when under the influence of a sound sleep, imagined a harrowing dream, and awoke affrighted in the extreme. This was communicated to my father, at his particular request, as he observed at the time an alteration in my mother’s usual flow of spirits. He had demanded an ex-

planation of the same, in order that if of any consequence, or it arose from any unforeseen or unfavourable cause, the necessary steps might be adopted for its remedy. It was thus explained to him. My mother conjectured she saw a hernie,* who had just produced her young in a thicket, apparently too dense and too secluded for human footsteps to penetrate. The spot was all but isolated, —a projecting headland severed on three quarters, by a continuation of chasms, the sides of which were rocky, broken, and perpendicular. The fourth side, in communication with the general surface of the country, shot up its luxuriant vegetation, filling in the crevices between the thickly entwined branches of the underwood, which were bound together by elastic creepers, and supported by the gigantic trunks of the forest trees, to which they clung, grateful for the shade they there enjoyed. The doe is fondling her young, licking it, and constantly administering the bounteous gifts of nature in the full extended udder, when of a sudden, a roar, appalling to my mother's hearing,

* *Hernie*.—Doe.

echoes through the thicket; a tiger fixes on the affrighted mother, bears her away, and leaves the new-born offspring destitute of parental assistance at this early stage of existence.

“ After this, my mother’s recollections could avail her nothing. The busy phantoms, and fleeting apparitions which hurried past her excited and phrenzied eye in succession, left no trace whatever behind their momentary existence, sufficient to awaken memory, either in the moments of high excitation, or when again her senses resumed their wonted power. The disastrous loss to myself, which robbed my father of a universally respected, and a most loving wife, and which occurred so shortly after the disclosure of this dream, was sufficient to awaken surmise. It created an impression on the minds of those who were made acquainted with it, that some import attached itself in reality, to what had borne tidings of the future to my mother’s mind, in the troubled irritation of disturbed rest. Reality had so closely followed the premises of fictitious impressions, that my father could not quiet his apprehensions until another meeting of the astrolo-

gers, aided with the ability of Abraham Ben Sadi, who presided, had determined that what futurity was intended to be developed, had, on my mother's being received unto the mercy of God, been fulfilled. The dream was also considered, direct in import, insomuch as the interpretation showed a child was to be bereft of its parent, which in my case was verified. The careful manner in which the hernie had sought the most sequestered spot, in an impervious jungle,* corresponded with that solicitude, which had been the cause of removing my mother from the city of Ahmedabad, to our estate, at a village little frequented, as being distant from the main road; in fine, every conclusion was elicited, that could favour the quiet of my father's anxiety on my account. It was still accounted that I was to be a favoured son of man, to live and to enjoy the life I was gifted with; but it has proved quite the contrary, Saheb, as you may imagine, from what I have already disclosed to you. Every body felt

* *Jungle*.—Applied to large tracts of country covered with forests.

certain, that ease and affluence, were in happy prospect before me. Oh, could they but now recover themselves from the grave and read my thoughts, or scan over my history, how widely would they discover they had been deceived.

It is true, sixteen years were passed over in blessed security, without any occurrence worthy of remark developing itself. It was at that time that I drank the intoxicating sherbet of delight, on becoming a perfect youth, well made, active, and strong. I began, of course, to entertain a serious aversion to my home pursuits, which yielded a poor harvest indeed to one, whose ambition, I have since discovered, was his principal bane in life. Although checked by my tutor, it yet burned within me, and when a fitting time arrived, again displayed itself. The old banyan tree, where I used to exhibit my talents before Syed Mahommed, my much valued tutor, now lost all its former attractions. No longer compelled to visit this spot, and spreading a carpet on the summit of the encircling mound of earth, and there recite aloud the Koran, I more than shunned it. There were, however, some moments

still left, when it charmed me ; and those were, when I stole a short repose in the cool and shaded retreats, formed by its pendant suckers, and thick foliage, after a fatiguing pursuit of the antelope in the neighbouring glens. These, although plentiful in the extreme, were difficult to approach, within the range of matchlock distance, and led me through the heat of the day, over many a coss,* before I could satisfy my impatience to fire, and do execution. My chief desire, was to behold Ahmedabad, the capital city of Guzerat, to see its minarets, Kuberistans,† and bazaars, and listen to the witching minstrelsy and music, of the beautiful courtezans it was remarkable for.

Often had my village contemporaries, after having accompanied their families to this vast and mighty city, returned with many a pleasing tale of its enchanting delights, and fed my eager curiosity with descriptions of the accomplish-

* *Coss*.—A measure of distance varying in each province, almost throughout India. In these districts about a mile and a half.

† *Kuberistans*.—Burial places.

ments of the typhas* of nautching women, and the abilities of the rasdaree, or itinerant musicians, peculiar to this province. Again, an aged fakeer, or religious mendicant, whose professed desire of rambling, solely existing on charity for support, was now somewhat damped in ardour, had, for several years, resided in our village. It was from inability, in some measure, that he at length relinquished his almost insatiable desire for rambling, as he was afflicted with severe attacks of rheumatism, which for a time, during a first return, paralyzed his limbs, and thereby rendered his undertaking distant and solitary journies, both harassing and perilous. At the western entrance to our village he had built himself a hut; and, as each traveller pressed forward, in whom he could recognise the Mahomedan feature, he jumped up from the low door-way, across the threshold of which he was generally seated, and, with a loud “hak, hak,

* *Typha*.—One complete set of dancing girls, generally consisting of an old duenna, three young proficientes, and three musicians.

ya illah," attracted the notice of the passing person, and seldom failed to obtain an alms. With him I used to associate much, whiling away the tardy hours ere sun-set, from noon-day, in listening to the animated recital of his marvellous and dangerous travels, the experience he had derived from them, and the never-failing repetition of how much our success in life depended upon our being early made acquainted with hardship, misfortune, and deprivation; as it tamed the prouder feelings of the mind, checked an over desire for pleasure, and crowned a competency, in after days, with contentment. All this was new to me, and I longed to commence such a career, that, in the winter of old age, like himself, I might be enabled always to command the attention of my guest, in recapitulating what I had gone through. His animated manner, his language, coupled with the detail of what suffering he had endured in the holy cause of abstracting his mind from this world, to contemplate more fully the majesty of God, and pay him more uninterrupted devotion, when unmingled with earthly concerns, has called the tear to my youth-

ful eye, or fired my brain with desire to join him in such undertakings. Had he once again embarked in another pilgrimage, naught would have prevented me joining him. Indeed, so much interest had he at one time aroused within me, that I proceeded, one day, in company with a calunder, from our village, with an intention not to return. But fortunately Abdoollah, a faithful old servant, had placed a watch upon my actions, and I was overtaken, and brought back again. With such excitement burning within me, and then eighteen years of age, I was unable longer to cope with the violence of my desires, and determined on visiting the capital of Guzerat, under any circumstances. But the fear of offending my father, who, when enraged, little regarded the punishment inflicted on the guilty party, kept me from immediately executing my design.

Accordingly, feigning every satisfaction at my present situation, to deceive my father as to my intentions, I watched, until a favourable opportunity at length occurred. The appointed arrangement of an old dispute, arising from the contested limits of a portion of my father's estate,

which he conceived had been encroached upon by a neighbouring ryot, a Mahratta, (may thousands of curses light on him!) called him to Currie, to be present when the cause was to be finally decided. Once gone, I immediately conjectured his removal was a stroke of good fortune, intended to favour my views, so long and so obstinately cherished: and I should have thought it tempting, at least, if not wilfully refusing to abide by fate, had I not started. Had he remained present, I doubt if ever I should have dared to interrupt the perfect submission that all the household entertained towards him in their conduct, by a wilful disobedience of his injunctions. But the temptation, and the present favourable posture of affairs, seduced me into a resolve to repair, without delay, to see the spot I had so often longed to visit. The distant danger of detection I armed myself against, in framing excuses beforehand; although it never entered my mind to be guilty of falsehood or prevarication, which only served to increase, on all occasions, his wrathful temper. It was certainly dangerous to encounter him in these

momentary ebullitions of anger. Again, supposing I should be detected, I knew full well how to act: for, where can you find a lad at my then age, who does not know how, either to flatter his parents into forgiveness, or to invent a contrivance to pacify their anger. After residing together from the hour of birth, how is it possible to avoid detecting the weaker traits of character in those you have associated with; and this knowledge, when properly made use of, aided in its operations by parental affection, can seldom, if ever, fail to ensure a victory to a son over a father. I had made my observations, and knew full well that the distant approaches towards reconciliation must be first made in professed contrition, and a full disclosure of all information demanded; then an interview, a few tears, and expressed determination never again to offend, would suffice to quiet him. The morning after my father's departure was fixed on for mine. My much-beloved sister, Noorumbie, two years younger than myself, tried to dissuade me from my purpose; but I was deaf to all entreaty. She, having furnished me with a few

rupees, and placed me under the especial charge of old Abdoollah, one of our servants, bade me adieu, with tears in her bright and shining eyes.

A tear in woman's eye has always had the greatest command over my feelings. However great my misfortunes, however much I have needed a counsellor, or my overcharged heart required to be disburthened, I have often controlled my desire to disclose my sorrows to my beloved Mao Saheb Beba, because her generous disposition made her weep, and I could not endure it. The affectionate tone, again, in which she bade me come back quickly, as I was on the point of starting, almost weaned me from going. Pride awakened within me : I had said I would, and go I must. Giving my horse his head, I dashed forward, to prevent any further appeal to my feelings ; for very little of that determination remained, which had given rise to my journey.

Abdoollah was a faithful old companion of my childhood ; one who could laugh, sing, or frown, in perfect accordance with my humour ; whose servility was equally the fruit of affection as of menial occupation ; and, therefore, calculated to

form a most desirable acquisition to me at that moment.

The fakeer, as we passed his hut, stood ready to mount his tattoo;* which, having effected, he joined our group, and all set forward under his guidance. I looked to him in particular for information regarding the caravanserais in the city, so that I might put up at one of the most frequented, as well as the most respectable to be obtained.

* *Tattoo*.—Pony.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(First Night continued.)

It was impossible at once to shake off from my mind the forebodings of mischief, which I was well aware might accrue to myself, from the steps I was taking. Again, Noorumbie's kindness returned to my recollection, and made me for a time, dejected and unhappy. But these were destined, to be over-ruled and frustrated by the novelty of my situation; and as' each new scene of lively interest presented itself, my thoughts became warmed into enthusiasm, and heated with pleasure. Serenity fixed itself upon my brow, my countenance was lighted up with satisfaction, and when I, at last, on the evening of the next day, entered the city of Ahmedabad,

at that time, the abode of luxury, of splendour, and of revelry, I could have cried with joy. Even my horse seemed to share my feelings, and moved on, curvetting and gamboling, now stopping short, as his eye was dazzled with the streaming pendant, fixed above the entrance to a pagoda, and now darting forward, as the bursts of music from a marriage procession came suddenly upon his hearing; again starting at the glittering of the wares in the booths, or scared at the folding of pieces of clothing, which had been opened by the merchant, presented to a customer, and failed in giving satisfaction; he kept me constantly on the alert, and my attention more fixed upon himself than was consistent with my desires. May we not even trace in the minutest actions of life, that man is destined to be the victim of disappointment, or at least that the portion of control he can exercise over his destiny is but trivial.

“Now to the right, now to the left,” roared out the fakeer, as he pointed to the direction we ought to pursue, “have a care, the lane is narrow,” he continued, “and an elephant coming

towards us, let us gain the nearest door-way, to rest whilst he passes, for this fidgetty, forest-bred tattoo of mine, threatens every moment to disencumber himself of my weight." All this I must confess, was pleasure to me. "There comes a cart, as I live," said our Bomeyah,* "and not room to pass us scarcely; listen to the wheel, what a noise it makes; mind your animal, Rustum Sahib, for mine is pricking his ears already. There, now," he again exclaimed, "we are pretty safe," as our way opened into the main street of the city, which is terminated towards the College, by the Teen Durwazeh, "we may proceed unmolested, unless some of these rascally half-naked boys have a mind to play us a trick or two. By Allah yah Illah, I'm thrown, and away goes my tattoo. Seize that urchin, who suddenly opened a chitrie in my animal's face, and made him fly from under me, as immediately as a ball escapes from a matchlock when fired off. I wish I had one, more accustomed to mixing in the world than my new purchase. Have a care, Rustum,"

* *Bomeyah*.—Guide.

he ejaculated, "or that rascally begarrie, with that bale of cotton on his head, will toss it off close to your horse's nose, to frighten him again, he with the bundle of grass, preceded by him with the kirby in his hand; keep your eye upon them, or some misfortune and bruises will accrue to you. Khoda Kurreem, there is Dost Ali, my old acquaintance. Ul hum dulillah, but surely that was Yuseuf,* the Jew, I know his long white beard; but who can mistake one of his caste—his gain-seeking disposition imprints avarice upon his countenance, and gives the fire of cunning to his eye. Behist men Koe ne Jayegah,† if that is not the Durwan of the Serai. Here, ho! come hither, dost,‡—what, are you blind? What, cannot you hear? come hither, I say. Khoda ya ullah. It is impossible to make him understand, he must be deaf and blind too. There, see what age does for us, Rustum, it denies us the renewal of an acquaintance that has

* *Yuseuf*,—Answering to Joseph.

† *Behist men Koe ne Jayegah*.—No one will go to Paradise.

‡ *Dost*.—Friend.

existed for years. Here let me pass you, you Cabob roaster," he continued, as he turned round his tat, "or I'll overset you into your fire," and on he dashed until he overtook Yar Mahomed, the person in question. I followed him. When we came up to Yar Mahomed, the garrulous fakeer, instantly accosted him with, "what misfortune has overtaken you? are your senses lost, or has a favourable turn of fortune effected, what the hand of time solely has a right to usurp the power of doing, made you blind to the person, and deaf to the language of an old friend. Here, turn;" "Salaam, salaam, aleikum," was the reply. Yar Mahomed received his friend's embrace as he had dismounted. "Jan Ka Dostdar,"* said the fakeer, tapping him upon the shoulder, "hasten to the old serai, where we have so often had a chillum together, heightened with the pleasurable chat of confidence, for we are fatigued and need rest. You can, Rustum, remain on horseback if you please, but I shall make free to lead my animal and walk on foot, for I am disgusted with the annoying shyness of my tat. Here,

* *Jan Ka Dostdar*.—Friend of my life.

follow us," he continued, "you must rein in a little, for I am no great walker, since I received an injury in my right hip joint, as I passed through the Barriah jungle, and was attacked by Bheels—now turn under this gateway," and we alighted. Here we were impeded in our progress by bales of merchandize, and now encountered groups of individuals in familiar chat, or intent upon business. The fakeer fastened his pony to the ring of the door-way, through which the chain fastening is passed, whilst I delivered over to Abdoollah, my horse's rein. Gaining the interior of the Serai, we saw bullocks lading, camels unloading, men labouring, others seated enjoying their hookah, some eating a meal, and many directing their dependants what to do, or cursing their obstinacy and laziness. Here rested the wearied traveller--there his wife was baking the unleavened cakes, intended for his repast; whilst in another corner, a banyan was inspecting some clothes and grain, finding fault with every thing, to reduce the owner's price, and make him eager to secure himself as a purchaser as soon as possible. In this direction, fires were lit for cooking, in that, vessels full of water were placed for

the accommodation of those, whose business debarred them the power of gaining the river to perform their ablutions there. Some were running to and fro, packing their wares—others engaged in arranging the various articles comprised in their traffic, in the most pleasing and attractive manner for the next day's sale. It was a busy scene indeed, to gaze upon as we passed through the centre of it, to gain the apartment of Yar Mahomed, where we were soon presented with pipes, coffee, and sherbet.

After a time I wandered out, when the moon had risen, to gaze again upon this scene of wonder and delight. Much of the former active bustle now was wanting, many had gone to rest, and others started as an escort to their property. Another party was on the eve of departure, whose chief was a young Mussulman, of high stature, and commanding look, and whose servant, ever and anon, offered him his calleon, as he desisted for a moment, from giving those instructions he deemed best fitting the occasion. "By the beards of my forefathers," ejaculated an old man, who with tottering steps approached the youth, "you

are here, are you? where is my daughter, where is she whom you have seduced from her home, and forbidden to my longing eye. May the curse of Allah descend upon you, heartless wretch, and every son of your mother. Where is my daughter, I say?"

"I know not," rejoined the youth, "nor do I care; I have not seen her, as my time is otherwise employed than in looking after the lowest of the low."

"What say you," exclaimed the old man, his wrath kindling at the sarcastic and pointed manner in which the youth had spoken. "The lowest of the low," he then repeated. "It may be so," and he sighed bitterly, "since she left her father's house, to follow the fancy of a libertine, and attached herself to such an impostor. But where is she, I demand to know?"

"Demands," retorted the other, "are only answered to by me, in proportion, as the power of the person making such, gives weight to his requests. You know me, and who I am, if not, perhaps, you may live and learn, or send one better fitting to gain information from me than yourself."

“That will I do,” said the old man. “If you do not think fit to deliver me up the choicest treasure of my heart, I swear by the all-powerful Allah, to be revenged. Yes, to be avenged,” he repeated, and drawing a dagger, plunged it in the side of the youth; whose screams for help soon collected his followers together, who would have murdered the old man upon the spot, had I not interfered to save him, and removed him to the apartment of Yar Mahomed.

I next sought out the youth, who lay stretched upon a carpet, at one angle of the building, weltering in his blood, in staunching the flow of which his adherents were busily employed. This once effected, he gradually improved, whilst his strength by degrees returned to him. Casting his eyes around, he recognised me, and asked if I could point out the direction the old man had taken.

“It is no business of mine,” I replied, “to aid your hope of revenge, or to give up age, when injured, to be assaulted by the hand of youth.”

“Then may ten thousand curses light upon

you," he wildly ejaculated, "and by this arm I swear never to leave you a happy moment, if chance and vigilance can so dispose it. Base-born villain," I exclaimed, "reserve your fruitless curses for your own head, and let them multiply upon you, in proportion as your guilt deserves them."

He endeavoured to reply, but I left him, little anticipating that I should again encounter him. Yet, I did so, as I will relate at the appropriate time.

The hour of repose had now passed by, and I hastened to the spot where my servant had prepared every thing for me. Throwing myself upon my carpet, which was spread over a heap of rice straw, I endeavoured to cultivate a few hours' sleep, but all to no avail. The busy scenes I had passed through, so novel and interesting, yet flitted past my memory, and kept me restless and uneasy, longing for the approach of the morrow.

On the following day, after our morning prayers were over, old Abdoollah, the fakeer, and myself, mounted, and set forward to make

ourselves acquainted with the city. "It is now a long time, since" commenced my talkative servant, "my last visit to Ahmedabad, and that was on the occasion of your father's nuptials with the kind mistress, who has already left this world, to mix with the houries in paradise. At that time we put up at the house of one of your mother's relatives, who supported a noble retinue of followers, and maintained well the dignity committed to his charge. Perchance we may find better quarters there, than in the dirty caravanserai we slept in last night, where the noise of those coming and going, with packing and unpacking of goods, cursing of servants, and all the *et ceteras* of busy traffic, left me few moments of rest after the fatigues of marching. Besides, the innumerable quantity of vermin, *Yah Khodah!* which kept me in a continual fidget, and heated me with torment, is what I am quite unaccustomed to, at your father's house. By my soul, I arose full twenty times during the night, to try and shake them off: but no; as soon as I again stretched myself upon the floor, the same uneasiness returned: as for sleeping,

it was impossible; indeed, the night has been far more unpleasantly spent by me than the day." "Lead the way, then, and we will follow," said the fakeer, "for I agree with you, that any private residence is far more fitting for comfort, than the one where we dismounted last evening: however, I am somewhat accustomed to what you, friend Abdoollah, so bitterly lament; for, during thirty years of my erratic life, I never obtained more comfortable lodging, and seldom one half so good. Those upon the main roads are far worse than this one, as every lazy bullock driver, or thrifty merchant, orders his cattle to be fastened under the same roof, as is destined to shelter a human being during a halt."

Our progress now led us down several narrow streets, enclosed on either side with houses, containing story upon story, adorned with balconies resting on sculptured supports, and screened from the rays of the sun, by roofs raised on marble pillars. The fronts and sides of these were neatly filled in with trellis-work of bamboo, or of hewn-out stone, and added privacy to the inner apartments, whilst the air had free

scope to reach the interior of the house, so highly essential in such a heated city as this one always is. These were mostly private residences. Again the novelty of the crowded bazaar opened to our view. The busy wrangling, the variety of dress, the general murmur around well-filled shops, thronged with customers, attracted my attention. The lounging horsemen, each with one arm resting on his spear, stuck in the ground, puffing their last chillum prior to starting—the women returning from the wells, whose uplifted arms, (as they raised them to support the vessels upon the crowns of their heads, and keep them balanced,) removed the veil which their garments formed over their features, and displayed beauty and youth, heightened with health and vigour, conspired to enchant me. Now the constant beating of hammermen, aided with the clashing of brass and copper upon the anvil, betokened that this street was chiefly occupied by copper-smiths and braziers. It must be so understood, for it is generally the case, that in large cities, those who pursue one trade, contrive to frequent the same lane and quarter of the town. Thus, lapi-

daries, silversmiths, sellers of cloth, and every tradesman, finds himself surrounded by others pursuing the same occupation, which is favourable to intermarriage, and helps to keep up an exclusive sect of their own. Whilst, on the one hand, this favours the divisions into caste, which, in India, usurp the place of the different grades of society observed in other countries, it tends much to facilitate the search of a traveller, after the merchant or citizen he requires, although it keeps up that uniformity of price, which tends so much to damp the efforts of industry. At last, the Delhi Durwazeh appeared full in our front. Making a sharp turn to the right, ere we reached it, we entered a spacious square or sahn, in which it was death for any idolater to place foot, but more especially for Jews. In the centre stood a mosque, and even yet, the muezzin tarried on the minaret, calling the followers of Mahomet to prayer, and reminding those, whose well-known countenances he failed to recognise on this occasion, that one of the five appointed numaz*

* *Numaz*.—A stated prayer.

ought now to be performed. With this exception, a perfect quiet reigned around; for hereabout, the busy noise of industry was not kindled at the uprising of the sun; for few, if any of those, whose sole occupation in life is gain and labour, and who early pursue their avocations of profit, lived within sight of this spot. "There," said my servant, pointing to an arched gateway, with a guard room above it, closed in by a massive wooden door, studded with iron nails, "there used, in former days, to live the person we are in search of. At that time he was in the vigour of youth. His generosity to those whom chance threw upon his notice was as proverbial, as his commanding interest, unbending character, and firm attachment to our blessed faith. But, whether he still continues to exist there, remains yet to be proved." So saying, he clapped his heels to his horse's sides, rode up, and beat violently at the entrance, demanding instant admission. "My master is at your door," he roared forth, "and yet, you hurumzadehs, you sleep." The durwan, recognising at length his voice, whilst his own name resounded around, bade Abdoollah

be silent, said he would open unto us, and bade us welcome. We entered a spacious quadrangle, inclosed with a brick wall, at the further end of which, was the residence of my maternal uncle. I had never before understood where his abode was. A few fountains, overshadowed by plantain and guava trees, played in stucco basins before the house, with a pleasing murmur; whilst, in the intervening space, parterres of rose, jessamine, and mogree shrubs, lent a grateful scent throughout the enclosure. A large range of stabling lay on our right, and the left hand side was crowded with the huts of the household servants, whose number, and large families, required extensive shelter, and gave to the whole the appearance of a small village, rather than a space allotted to the retinue of a single individual. I had scarcely made this cursory survey of the enchanted spot I stood within the precincts of, ere Murdan Khan, advancing in haste, after the announcement of my name, threw his arm around my neck, and lavished on me the fond caresses of friendship. "The presence of my nephew quite gladdens my heart," said he;

“it is an unexpected pleasure, shedding joy throughout my humble retreat; a new sun to shine in my court-yard, and illuminate my house: pray enter, and receive the hospitality I can offer you; little indeed, but proffered with sincerity.” We now ascended up some marble steps, to the level of the open verandah in front of the house, which was considerably raised, where the servants spread a carpet and some embroidered cushions, for us to recline upon, whilst they prepared coffee and calleons for our refreshment. The cool, invigorating air I here enjoyed, was most pleasant and agreeable, more especially after the oppressive closeness of the serai. Murdan Khan Bahadour, I must here remark, was now far advanced in years. His lifetime had been spent amidst a constant series of vicissitudes, and the hardships to which he had been exposed during his military career, had tended much to add a rigour to his weather-beaten brow, which little corresponded with the natural mildness of his disposition, and formed a deceitful criterion, by which to judge of the true character of him, in whose presence I then was, and within whom a heart, ever

generous, open, and clear of guile, warmed into noble actions, the impulses of nature. In lieu of following the luxurious habits of a harem life, as enervating to the body as injurious to the mind, he had, from earliest boyhood, pursued more manly pursuits, and nursed his constitution with constant and well-regulated exercise. To this, doubtless, he was indebted for that robust frame which, in after years, made such a firm stand against age and infirmity. He, at the time I speak of, enjoyed the perfect use of all his mental faculties; could recal the slightest occurrence from the oblivion of years rolled by; and yet retained a portion of that ardour for the sports of youthful pastime, which the age of sixty alone forbad his engaging in. Although courtesy was mixed in every sentence he exchanged with me, mildness apparent in his manners, there was a something in his keen and searching eye, which made me shrink from its gaze, when I discovered it resting upon my person. It was equally bright and clear, indicative of determination and discrimination, like that of the mongoose, fixed upon the snake, chosen as its victim. I felt my soul

quake within me in the presence of this aged man : and although not a single black hair disturbed the uniform fleecy whiteness of his beard, which added a becoming dignity to the sunken cheek and aged expression of his countenance, and moreover in our embrace I had felt the palsied tremor of his limbs, I know not why, but I felt uneasy before him. Youth was mine, daring my courage, and guiltless was my heart. There was no compunctious feeling of a sorrowing conscience to abash me ; and yet I could not abide his look. He appeared armed with age, to lend him additional power over youth, and awe it into submission. I have never again during my life-time, beheld one, which either flushed with the heat of anger when opposed to me by a foe in battle, ever inspired me with such admiration of his character, or tended so much to cool me into submission, as the quiet, placid, yet majestic countenance of my uncle did. A short silence succeeded the old man's first burst of transport : his attention seemed chiefly directed to me. His eye did not appear to be resting on any one portion of my body in particular, but one glance seemed to scan me from

head to foot; and a significant shrug of my uncle's shoulders, told me it was not attached to my person fruitlessly, as he seemed by it to read my inmost thoughts. "Well," exclaimed he at length, "God is merciful! What he denieth to one, he granteth to another. With prayer and intercession have I implored his Almighty mercy, for the blessing of offspring, but such it is not, as yet, my fortune to obtain, or His will to grant. I well remember the time when your father was blessed with your birth, Rustum Khan, for it cost the life of her, who was my fond and affectionate sister. Often has she bound up my wounds, the fruits and recompense of warfare; tended me in my suffering moments, both in the camp, and when inactive in the city. May she receive her deserts! It seems to me but as yesterday, although some fourteen years since, when your venerable tutor, produced his apt scholar in my presence, and made him recite such portions of the koran, as his religious enthusiasm and persevering industry had, even in those early days of your life, impressed upon your memory; I hope you do not forget them, do you? But

what brings you here? How is your father? still wedded to his Inaum Jagier, or what prevented his accompanying you hither? I was ever a sincerely attached relative of his; and now that age keeps me aloof from him, he entirely deserts me.” “He is absent at Currie,” I replied, “on business of some importance. A Mahratta Ryot has encroached on his property, and he awaits the decision of the Brahmin appointed to investigate the business, and before whom a punchayet* is now assembled, for the purpose of adjusting the difference between the parties.

“A punchayet,” said my uncle, “a punchayet, indeed! What say you boy? What association have you conjured up? surely you jest. To mingle the name of one of our family, with the title of Khan in perpetuity, and noble blood in our veins to maintain it, with that of an accused heretic, a caffer, a villain, a slave, a—a—a I know not what. To picture your father to me as sup-

* *Punchayet*. — Properly, a meeting of five, but applied to any assemblage for the purpose of investigation, corresponding to a jury.

pliant before a Brahmin, whose chief merit lies in cunning and deceit. It cannot be, it must not be, and it shall not be! by Allah, I can't abide the idea," he added, whilst a stern frown lent terrors to his kindled wrath, "a suppliant before a Brahmin, and that without a struggle or bloodshed. Useless now indeed is the shop of the Sickli Gur, when words are to be weapons, and the mandates of a Hindoo (curses light upon him and his name)" and he spit upon the ground, "are to be attended to. Better lose the half, aye, the whole of one's property," he ejaculated, with vehemence, "than allow such bigoted fanatics the opportunity of beholding a single follower of the Holy Prophet, in the character of a suppliant, asking of a Brahmin the grant of his rights. They might rob me by main force of every beegah* of land I possess, but whilst my life remained, my efforts should be unceasing to obtain redress, in an appeal to arms, not words. Arms! I say arms! Blood alone, in such a case, could form any equivalent for an injury sus-

* *Beegah*.—A measure of land.

tained, and if it could be procured by the sword, nothing should intimidate my attempts to drink it from the fountain's source, in him who wronged me. Such was not the case with this country heretofore. Could you have seen Ahmedabad when I first knew it, how different a scene did it present; a single spear of an Islamite, herded these worshippers of images, as the staff of the herdsman collects the cattle, and compels them to the spot he wishes them to reach. Then, it remained in the wielder of the weapon to direct their march, as he inclined, either to labour in the mutilation of their profane temples, or to fan him when wearied, or to dig wells, or to lose their heads. But now, your father," he said, "indulges himself in beseeching a Brahmin." Here he relapsed into silence. Astonished and affrighted at his language, I could scarcely refrain from tears when his bitter sarcasm included the name of my father. The vehemence of my uncle's temper, at the moment, overawed me; I paused, attempted to articulate, yet speech was denied to me. When, with the return of reason, I found, after weighing each word he had uttered, how he deprecated

my father's conduct, how could I longer delay an answer. "You may esteem my father a base-born coward, if you please," I retorted, "but this I am certain of, that my father entertains as sincere," and I dwelt upon the word, "a regret, at being thus constrained to remain obedient to the will of others, of a different persuasion, as you yourself, clad in the dignity of your own upright feelings, can do. But then," I added, "no doubt he is anxious to insure the continuance of his property to his family, which, at this moment, is most desirable, when but a drop of the former ocean of our wealth remains to us, and this restrains his conduct. He has a father's affection to contend against, you must remember, Sir."—"He has, he has, and well may it control his spirit. Nothing remains for us to hope for. The Mahratta authorities, amongst whose base-born bands there pulsates not the heart of a single true warrior, are now too firmly fixed in dominion here, to be up-rooted. Let your father strive to maintain the little he has remaining to him. I commend, I commend him, I say, Rustum. Yet, where the Mahommedans

rule not, they ought, if possible, to remove from. They were never made for slaves, to kiss the slipper of a fanatic, and cringe to worshippers of idols. No! let justice flourish where it will, let it even be better administered by others than by ourselves, I care not; by the beard of the Sacred Prophet, I swear never to appear before that tribunal over which the Cazi presides not. They have let me rest as yet in peace, and I remain in the land of my forefathers, only on account of my age. My dependant situation, however, is irksome, and only softened by a knowledge, that my influence amongst the inhabitants of this city, even in these degenerate days, when the standard of the crescent is here furled, commands from the government this respect towards me, rather than making me their debtor for any civilities.’”

The narrator paused, he had thrown so much of the vigour and animated manner of his relative, into his own description, that I could plainly discover he had fatigued himself; I therefore desired my servant to bring in some sherbet and the pan shuparee, made up into triangular par-

cels, each inclosing some beetul-nut, cardamums and spices, fixed with a single allspice where the pan-leaf is terminated in the fold—this is considered a warning, for departure. The stranger seemed to appreciate my motives. I saw him to the door; he gave his blessing, promised his return the following evening, and I soon lost all trace of his receding form, as he proceeded up the broad avenue of trees, towards the extremity of the garden.

“ Well, moonshee,” I said to my tutor, “ have you been amused?”—“ Han Khodavind, that’s a more amusing character than I expected him to be. But I hope he is not going to confine himself entirely to maxims.” “ Neither do I,” I replied, “ but you may retire.”

CHAPTER III.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(Night the Second.)

“ To trust a friend, will shew you raw,

“ Your friend will stuff your hide with straw.”

Türki Proverb.

ONCE more the moonshee and myself were impatient; the evening was exceedingly oppressive, and the vapours which arose around the palace seemed to encircle our mansion in misty clouds; and fancy, once awakened, might have pictured to our minds the castles of fairy queens, or infuriated enchanter. Above the banks of the river, one continued line of vapour extended, through which the eye could not penetrate, but above which again, in the distance, a

partial glimpse of stuccoed domes and lofty minarets, might be obtained from the terrace to which we had ascended, and where the carpets were spread for our ease and enjoyment. Stretched at my length, regardless of the evils and disease which present pleasure, aided with the fog around, might engender, I reclined upon a cotton-stuffed mattress, now arguing with my tutor, and now again putting the oft-repeated question, "Do you think he intends coming?" Once more he turned to the well-known direction, and exclaimed, "Ya, illah, here he is advancing," and down we both hurried to welcome in the stranger.

"What weather!" exclaimed our guest. "By your neck I swear, Saheb, I have scarcely enjoyed a moment's repose; but move on up to the terrace above, which is a capital arrangement I think, on your part." "Now for some coffee, if you please, Mahomed." "Salaam, salaam aleikum," I replied, and down he seated himself. He then resumed his narrative in the words of his uncle.

"But if ever the arm of power be raised," continued my aged relative, in the same tone of vio-

lence as I have before described, “to oppress me or mine, I would repel every attempt to injure my name, or lose the few moments that are yet left me by fate to enjoy in this world, in supporting that acknowledged character of a brave man, which I have hitherto borne. Without a moment’s warning, and favoured by surprise, would I assail their guards, for even now, I am aware, that full ten thousand sabres would be unsheathed to defend our rights, upon the slightest attempt to dishonour our noble bearing. The Mahomedans in this quarter want but a leader, and if he should prove active and courageous, tempering zeal with the wisdom of experience, the town would be surmounted with the banner of the crescent, so lately plucked from its towers. But what avail such thoughts as these to me, when age confines my efforts to mere speech? Anxiety for the welfare of his family, makes your father, boy, live on, in certain dependance, although clothed in, and disguised under, the pleasing semblance of retaining, or having justice yielded him, after appeal, that which is his due. How long it may remain thus, time alone

can develope. But do you know, Rustum, that I am quite ashamed of myself for allowing the actions of these fanatics to arouse my anger, when I am prevented, by infirmity, from drawing a weapon to avenge our rights. You must excuse me."

The impulse given to the old man's feelings, began, at length, gradually to subside. After desiring me to quit the caravanserai, and expressing his regret that I should have remained there one hour, he ordered my horse to be picketted in his court-yard, and left me to my ruminations.

During a stay of several days, nothing remarkable, was to be observed in the peaceful dwelling I was an inmate of. This interval was employed in gaining, by means of the fakeer, some intelligence regarding my relative, with whom I was a guest. Murdan Khan, it was elicited from him and others, indeed he had in our first interview confessed it to me, had as yet no family. The taper of his life was fast consuming away, without the prospect of a new light to continue his shining name with posterity. This was his only

serious care, for wealth he had in plenty, and luxury reigned throughout his dwelling. If at intervals his anger, as I had witnessed, was suddenly aroused, upon the contemplation of his countrymen's degraded state, it again subsided when reason predominated. In after days, as his confidence in me was strengthened, and he reverted to his not being a father, he expressed this sorrow to me, as a most corroding one. "Let your father's misfortunes, Rustum Khan," he would then say, "follow and crowd upon each other, as the thickly spread clouds in a stormy sky, it signifies but little, for the sun of good fortune, the boon of progeny, has risen to chase them away."

On this account, syeds, moollahs, muftis, and muezzins, were constantly assembled at his house, and led a life of ease, combined with luxury, at his expense. These were earnestly besought by him, and bribed into acquiescence, with money and feastings, to intercede with the all-merciful Allah in his behalf, and obtain for him the only wish of his soul. Again, many young ladies of distinguished rank and surpassing beauty, had,

in his earnest hopes of eventually becoming a father, been espoused of late, and added to the number of his wives, or received under his protection, which had, as it was explained to me at the time, tended much to exhaust his income, and sow the seeds of dissension in the garden of beauty, as each new favourite, for a time, was particularly honoured with my uncle's attention. It might have been so, or not. How can I, who never dared to direct my eyes even towards the blinds of the harem, pretend to assert or form an opinion of what was going forward there. But this has my long and varying path through life led me to the knowledge of: that on such occasions, the sad discrepancy of age between the contracting parties, can seldom, if ever, allow of any real happiness. It must be when both are in the spring of life, that marriage can remain a sacred tie,—not when the blasting age of one, chills the kindling fullness of the other; and so it proved in the instance I am relating. Murdan Khan was treated with contempt in his private apartments, and oft betrayed, although the attentions he paid those who thus dis-

honoured him, deserved a better return. The expenses of his harem establishment were unlimited; every whim of his khanums* was readily complied with, and she who first eased his aching heart, knew she was to be gifted with supremacy over this part of his household, for her condescending favour, and proof of her attachment.

Moreover, two moollahs constantly resided in his dwelling, and these were consulted upon all occasions. The rigid penances they had fixed upon the old man, and the numerous fasts they had enjoined his observance of, were not considered sufficient, although almost beyond his power to support. They even restricted the number, and time of his visits to the objects of his affection, whilst the slightest infraction of their wishes, was augmented, by these villains, into an antidote against the hope of his ever receiving the blessing of an offspring. Such was the infatuation of the old man, may he be forgiven, that he placed implicit credence in their representations, and gave them free admission to his

* *Khanums*.—Answering here to wives.

women's apartments, alleged by them, as the most fitting place for them to pursue, in prayer, the grant of his desires, from the all-merciful Allah. And can it be believed, the astrologers of this city, in those days, a set of well-paid miscreants, whose words were, by superstitious credence, magnified into laws, and to whom the moollahs referred my uncle, had the astonishing impudence, when they were consulted by him, to declare, that during his absence, was the most proper time for the prosecution of their pursuits.

Thus was an old soldier, (who could, on every occasion, with a declared enemy, have defied the possibility of being deceived, because experience upon such points had rendered him a sage,) outwitted by the cunning of two licentious profligates. These, by exhibiting an open manner, and clothing themselves with the garb of religious enthusiasm in his cause, betrayed him in the foulest manner. Their deep-laid plots, seconded with every misrepresentation the ingenuity of man can invent, and the weakened judgment fall a victim to, gained for them an opportunity of intriguing within the sacred pre-

cinets of his Zenanah, which was all they wished or wanted. He had discovered to them his weak point; his generous candour knew no disguise, suspicion was a stranger to his mind, and magnanimity of character made him heedless. They had not failed to make these discoveries, nor were they slow in taking advantage of such fortuitous circumstances, which opened to them, as if under the direction of fate, a freedom, which taken by stealth, or made known by chance, can admit of death alone, as an atonement. He, who could have discovered in the assumed smile of his acknowledged foe, the counterfeited disposition of the moment,—he, whom the whisper of such dishonours as were heaped upon him, would have maddened into ungovernable fury, and whose keen scymitar would have alike committed the crime and the offenders to oblivion, in one blow, was here prostrated and lulled into confidence, by the knavery of a set of villains, because he was blinded by an overheated anxiety to obtain the consummation of his wishes, at any rate or sacrifice.

But that which had so completely blinded my

relative's understanding, was wanting in respect to mine. I had no such object to sigh for. There was nothing for me to look forward to with such deep excitement, as in his case, proved his inability to protect himself from imposition. A suspicion of the designs of these hypocritical rascals opened upon me at once, and the idea, novel in the extreme to my youthful mind, and equally revolting, caused me to pursue, with unrelenting vigour, every favourable opportunity of proving the justness of my suppositions. Besides, the wrong sustained was rendered doubly obnoxious to my ideas, by the ties of consanguinity.

To have dishonour heaped upon any individual of that family I had ever been taught to respect, and that committed even under my own knowledge, was more than I could bear to dwell upon. It fired me with revenge, and rendered day and night alike a period of deep thought and maddening woe. At length, I sought my old friend the fakeer, who had ever been a sincere adviser to me, and communicated to him the thoughts of my mind.

“ I am resolved,” added I, “ to at once recall Murdan Khan from the trance he is absorbed in. Are those sad perverters of the blessed faith of Islamism, thus to trespass upon our most sacred rights, without even a chance of punishment, or being checked in their evil doings. No, sooner would I die, than live to witness the depth of their cunning practised upon the guileless heart of him I love. No, I say, I will hasten to communicate the impressions left upon my mind by their conduct, to him who is the injured party.”

“ Be not too hasty,” rejoined my confidant ; “ neither would I counsel you to desist altogether. How can I do otherwise than applaud the action you have signified your determination to do. Wait a little—listen beforehand—a word now may save a blow hereafter. If you, Rustum Khan, youthful and inexperienced as you are, pretend to divine the evil doings, so apparent in this household, without any specific charge, to bear you through, and lead to certain conviction, what will be the result ? If your accusations remain unproved, you will be tainted with the

opprobrium of having endeavoured to attach disgrace and shame to the leaders of your religion, without sufficient cause. It will be asked by those who are ignorant of the whole affair, and have only your actions to guide them in deciding, where is the foundation on which he has built the guilt of a syed and a moollah, persons deserving of reverence from all true Mahommedans. If unprepared to meet this question, then will follow remorse, at having been unconsciously betrayed into an ill-timed accusation. You will become an object of scorn amongst your companions. Go where you will, to the east, west, north, or south, you will still find the finger of scorn directed towards you; you will again and again hear repeated, ‘it was he who accused the moollahs,—turn your backs: here he comes—the eye of the wicked is hurtful. Only rest awhile.

“ These wily sycophants are too conversant in the ways of the world; too well acquainted with the humours of the old man, whom they have hitherto insulted with impunity, not to outstrip your feeble declarations, or your demonstrations,

on which you rest their infamy, in an appeal to their sacred characters and religious offices. He who can admit of such innovations on his domestic privacy, must be blindly ignorant in this particular. The object of his desires again solely engrosses his attention, and forms another stimulus, to urge you to a conviction that he will not receive any vague or unsatisfactory conclusions. The abilities of those you will have to contend against, heightened by long experience in the mode of sinning undetected, will soon overcome you, and not leave you any chance of effecting much good by interfering at this moment. The appeal must lie, in addressing your uncle, to him who is already imposed upon ; and however strong a conviction may arise, if short of indisputable fact, the necessary belief, inasmuch as it must upbraid his own folly and carelessness, will, undoubtedly, be too repugnant to his feelings, to be freely admitted into his mind."

This line of argument, so completely at variance with what I had anticipated from him, urged me to desist, whilst the sound reason his speech contained, completely changed my intentions. It would, I saw, be impossible to effect

any change at present ; yet I entertained a hope that, perchance, the same fortune which suggested the idea to me at first, might, in the end, lead me on the road to obtain the fulfilment of my desires, in their detection, with a better chance of success. It was needless any further to rebel against common sense ; I therefore took his counsel, gave him my thanks, tried to soothe myself, and establish a salutary control over my inclinations.

The evening on which I first entered Ahmedabad, was on the commencement of the festival of the Mohurrum. Although my father was a most enthusiastic admirer of the system pursued by the Mahommedans in India, on this occasion, the old moollah had, in his religious fervour, imparted to me some portion of his antipathy to the ceremonies usually observed at such times. " Where," he would yearly remark, when our village tazier* was paraded, " where, amongst

* *Tazier*.—A light, elegantly formed mausoleum, carried about on men's shoulders during the festival of the Mohurrum,—instituted to commemorate the death of Houssein Hussein.

all that noise, confusion, and debauchery, can we trace one symptom of that sorrow, for the severe loss sustained on the day this instituted holiday is intended to commemorate? How can drunkenness and ribaldry accord with sorrow? In all the multitude assembled around you, my son, he would say, where can you find the shadow of regret? Yet it is a feeling, which ought to pervade the minds of all classes of Mahommedans. The king ought to indulge in grief, at this moment, whilst his subjects should also estrange themselves from their worldly occupations, and make their peace with God, in shedding tears over the remembrance of the loss of those holy brothers. Yet custom has uprooted reason, and mirth superseded the gloom which, in former ages, spread over the minds of the followers of the blessed Prophet, and is yet observed in all those countries, where superstition, and a love of pleasure has not invaded our blessed faith and customs."

This was all true enough; but variety hath ever charms for the youthful mind, when reason can, of itself, hold no sway whatever on our passions. On the last evening, when the taziers parade the

streets in procession, I repaired to the bazaar, to be a witness to the magnificent spectacle I was instructed to expect. The night was dark and rainy, yet this little impeded the ceremony. The city was in an uproar—discharges of matchlocks echoed through the streets; the voices of singers were confounded in the din of shouting, whilst all kinds of instrumental music helped to augment the confusion of sounds. Thousands of torches rendered a glaring light, which was reflected again from the glittering vestments of the multitude in the streets. The houses were illuminated; rockets burst above my head, whilst crackers were trampled under my feet as I proceeded. Here deep pits were dug, in which bonfires blazed; and there, again, a large company assembled at the house of a wealthy man, witnessed nautch girls, singing strains in praise of those whose death this day was the anniversary of. Crowd followed upon crowd; here horsemen dashed along, and there again, groups of masked individuals arrested the attention for a moment. In the midst of this busy scene, tazier after tazier passed under the Teen Durwazeh,

near to which I had placed myself. At the head of each, with very little deviation, were groups of tumblers, followed by half-naked men, painted all over with a shining black colour, to represent Caffrees; others were led about in chains, representing tigers, now crouching, now springing about amongst the people. The protectors of the tazier were immediately behind these, well armed, and carrying naked swords and creeses in their hands, which glittered brightly; now came groups of dancing girls, adorned with costly jewels, singing in mournful melody, and dressed in silken garments of the richest texture. Supported aloft, the tazier was borne on men's shoulders. These light and beautiful toms, each different in its shape and pattern; some highly ornamented, and others plain in the extreme, moved slowly forward. At intervals, a halt was made, when the crowd giving way, a ring was formed; in the midst of which, wrestlers, and others, exhibited their prowess. Shouts of "Ali, Ali," burst from thousands every instant. Enthusiasm was high in the extreme, and as the lower classes of Hindoos

join in this festival, the whole city obeyed the impulse. Such a sight I had never before gazed on, so that it was not until an early hour of the following morning, that I bent my way to regain Murdan Khan's dwelling.

With my anxiety to detect the moollahs in their evil practices, I had hitherto been so entirely engrossed, that I had devoted little, if any attention, to the main object of my desires, which, when I quitted home, were solely centered in a thorough acquaintance with the beauties of the city. About mid-day, I mounted my horse, and joined in the crowd, accompanying one of the taziers on its way, to be lodged in the mausoleum of a reputed saint, situated on the road to Udawledge. The terraced roofs of the houses, and every window that could favour a view, were crowded with females, who could there enjoy the gay and varying scene, which moved before their gaze, without the chance of interruption. My eyes were, of course, more generally fixed upon these spots than directed to the multitude in which I mixed, and, Oh, Allah ! the beauty I beheld on this occasion, baffles any description.

The tazier now impeded by the thronging multitude, was halted for a considerable time opposite one of the finest mansions which graced the interior of Ahmedabad. It was in one of these balconies, in front of this building, that I first caught a glimpse of her, who, as I have already disclosed, afterwards honoured me with her affection. As our progress again brought me to the spot I had started from, I dismounted from my horse, and being joined by the fakeer, we pursued our way on foot. The tazier having been at length safely deposited in the place intended, the procession broke up, and each group of companionship separated from the main body, to seek the nearest way to their homes.

The evening was sultry and oppressive in the extreme, so that the inviting shade presented by a tope of mangoe, neem, banyan, and peepul trees, encircling a large bowrie,* enticed us to a moment's rest. The spot, although not far from the main road, was secluded in the extreme. The holiday merriment, for such may it justly be

* *Bowrie*.—A well.

called, to which I had been witness, had relieved the husbandmen from their toil; the cattle were absent grazing, in lieu of labouring to raise the heavy-laden bucket from the well. So that neither the voice of anger, raised at the instance of animal obstinacy, nor of industrious exertion, disturbed the quiet stillness of this rural spot. It seemed completely deserted.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(*Second Night continued.*)

“The villain’s heart is steeled against remorse, until the appointed hour: when fate discloses his real character, and his machinations threaten to destroy him.”—*Persian.*

“MY son,” said the fakeer, “let us first refresh ourselves with a bath, then slake our thirst, and afterwards take an hour’s repose in some of these sheds. Doubtless we shall find out, unless my former discernment has failed, from being unemployed of late, some comfortable spot for that purpose, which has often before been pressed upon during the mid-day hours, by others more weary than ourselves. Ya, Khoda, fatigue is not the lot of one, but of all; and I have had an exuberant share of it myself. But, quick!” Ac-

quiescing in his proposal, I performed my ablutions: and, as youth favoured my movements with expedition, I was at leisure first, and bent my way down the embankment of earth, which had been excavated from the well, keeping within the road the bullocks traverse at their toil. The trees upon the summit were so numerous, and so thickly planted, that the grateful shade which encompassed the bowrie, courted me rather to repose there from inclination, than venture within the precincts of such places as were, I well knew, little better than nests of vermin. The fakeer, however, would not be dissuaded from his proposition; and, accordingly, in one of the adjacent sheds we seated ourselves. At the further end, a partition ran along the entire width of this rude cattle shelter. Thickly plastered with mud, over the reeds of which it was composed, it formed a firm and elastic wall. The voices of men in conversation, had attracted our attention as we entered; but, had not my name been distinctly repeated once or twice, we should never have thought of listening to the dialogue. My companion, on hearing this, beckoned me to

hide myself next him, behind a gung, or heap of kirby, piled close to the wall I have mentioned. I did so. Thus screened from any observation, we overheard the following conversation:—

“ If, my friend ; if, I again say, (but you are not listening,) it should so occur, that Rustum should undeceive that old namurd,* Murdan Khan, soft-hearted caffer as he is, and discover to him any of our well-concerted plans, which obtain for us the pleasures of paradise, in the enraptured moments we spend amongst the houri-ies of this terrestrial sphere, what shall we do? How do you propose to avert such a misfortune, or prevent the current of shame from overwhelming us?”

“ Simply by denial: that will suffice, I think, against his imputations. What ! shall we be outstripped in cunning by such a hurum-zadeh as that beardless boy, who cannot even have heard, during his whole life-time, of what intrigue is, or tasted of its pleasures ; and is in-

* *Namurd*.—Used here as an opprobrious epithet.

competent to judge of the beauty contained in a rounded arm, compressed ancle, or tapering waist, such as my Noorumbie possesses? And oh! again, by Allah! that eye, to which the diamond when compared, is, as the sands of the desert, put in competition with the fruitful womb of the mines of Golcondah; and I am to be denied its cheering ray. No, no! never, never, by heaven I swear, shall such an upstart as that, shave the beard of my delight off the chin of my pleasures: if done at all, it must be done by one, whom life has gifted with much more experience than has been granted to Moollah Hachim. Hah, hah, hah, and Rustum to be the hero; I cannot help laughing at it! He to defend credulity imposed upon, shall I call it so; or, rather, should I not say credulity honoured? Wah! wah! Shabash! I am delighted! let him give the thrust, and I am, as I think I shall prove myself on this occasion, rather an experienced hand at the parry. No, no, my friend, it is impossible for him to injure us. Fate has borne us to the regions of bliss, and allowed us to enjoy ourselves undetected for the last three years, and to prosper in our undertakings: so that you may believe me, I

shall not tempt my good fortune to desert me, by scorning to make use of it. Come what will, I am prepared: a smooth face, a little well-expressed indignation, and a dagger pointed towards my sacred breast, will suffice, aided with the language of cunning; will it not?"

"I fear you are too sanguine, friend, in trusting to your prowess to shield you with security. Beware; that accursed fakeer has thrice frustrated my visits to the joy of my heart, Fatimah. And what could have been his object, where I have seen him, but our detection. Once, when my advice had removed Murdan Khan, oh, the heartless fool! to the large mosque in the Sahn, to feed on prayer, and enter into vows with heaven, I hastened, flushed with expectation, to seek her for whom I would, nay, even now could, sacrifice my life; behold, that lynx-eyed monster fortunately discovered himself, and saved me from committing myself before him. For once, the mongoose made his dart at the snake too soon, and it, like myself, withdrew uninjured into its hole, without venturing farther. Oh, how I burned to plunge my dagger in his heart! but

my sacred character, you see, always steps in, to paralyze my arm. Again, I have heard the nature of their opinion regarding us; for I seldom sleep, when my safety demands my watching. Imagining themselves perfectly secure from observation (but God is merciful, and placed me near them,) they entered into conversation, in an old turret near the city walls, to the eastward; and actually argued the propriety of intimating to old Murdan, the blockhead, those well-founded suspicions (as we have reason to know them to be, but they want power to prove them) which they entertain of our conduct.

“ Rustum Khan was for an immediate disclosure, all fire and life, burning with indignation, and wholly incautious: he must have committed himself to our hearts’ satisfaction. Not so, however, the fakeer, may curses light on him! who strongly recommended a little patience. In thus restraining the impetuosity of that colt, unbroken in the ways of the world, and scared at every trifling object his eye (may it be dimmed in discernment) encounters, he has deprived us of the opportunity of challenging inquiry, when absolute facts

are wanting against us. They hold the torch, but want the oil to feed the flame. But I am afraid such may yet be obtained, unless we can find contentment in recapitulating the pleasures we have enjoyed, in lieu of continuing to feast upon them. Accursed be that old villain's plausible tongue! what would I not give to be upon a musnud, and issue to the nassuckjee,* orders to deprive him of it, aye! in my presence, too, that I might taunt him, when unable to reply."

A pause ensued. The old fakeer, restless and uneasy from the confined posture we were forced to adopt for security, had for sometime shewed symptoms of impatience, and now began to move about. As for myself, I could neither stir nor speak, and remained with my ear to the wall, holding in my breath. "We are overheard," ejaculated Moollah Hachim, "draw instantly, and let us seek revenge. Did you not hear that noise?—there, and there again, some one moves—let him not escape; by heavens, hasten, I say." So saying, they rushed into the shed. Their

* *Nassuckjee*.—Executioner.

haste and violence, combined with their shouts, awakened a village dog sleeping near us. His hurried flight, and the cautious manner in which we had concealed ourselves, in preventing our discovery, quieted their apprehensions, and his presence accounting for what had awakened their suspicion, they again retired to their former haunt, and renewed the conversation. At first their voices were scarcely audible, but audacity, the offspring of undetected villainy, soon rendered every word familiar to our hearing, as they proceeded.

“Yah, Ulahi,” exclaimed Moollah Hachim, with a sigh, “Yah, Ulahi, is there then, in your opinion, a chance of our good fortune deserting us, now that our machinations have succeeded, and all the scruples of old Murdan are overcome and banished from his mind? Is it thus we are to be frustrated by adversity? Khoda ne Khawstah, God forbid! No, it shall not be. He, who in his folly, has thrown wide-open the doors of his harem, cannot easily be awakened into a belief that those to whom his secrets are confided are guilty enough to profit by his rashness. Do you not recollect, when the old Ayahshah, on her

death-bed, worked upon by fear and repentance, revealed to old Murdan, the cause of Noorumbie's miscarriage, how well I parried the assault, by an appeal to the obligations, I laboured under towards him, and then asked him if he could credit her aspersions. This is the bait with which to fasten on the old man's credulity. How near were his desires consummated at that period. Noorumbie had then been pregnant for some months. Some travelling jadooghurs,* having sought permission to entertain us with their performances, were, at her particular request, ushered into the court-yard, and the screens of the ladies' apartments removed, in order that they might enjoy the entertainment. Their performances were uncommonly clever, and pleasing to behold. They almost displayed as much depth of cunning as ourselves, Moollah Ibrahim. They were extremely good, in their way, do not you recollect; and I hope we, like their tricks, may remain equally undetected, and obtain a name for sanctity, equally as superstitiously imposing as their knavery. On no occasion would the old

* *Jadooghurs*.—Conjurors.

dotard, during this trying period to his feelings, refuse her any thing she asked, or even hinted at, which caused what I am going to relate. In the evening, Noorumbie, who had received a handsome present of jewels from her husband, and yielding to the vacillating fondness of the female mind, began taunting me, in her inconsiderate, provoking manner, with the line of deceitful conduct we were pursuing, and intimated her wish to make a disclosure. I expostulated, now calmed her with flattery—now swore to turn wandering mendicant, if she thus would doom one, who sincerely loved her, to disgrace, now bedimmed my eyes with tears, sighed and wept, now praised her beauty—her raven locks—her melodious voice—her lovely form—but no, it would not do. I was forgotten for the moment. The soil in which her love for me had grown, had fostered another plant, more pleasing to her gaze. Age and imbecility were disregarded; for gold and ornaments had placed a temporary screen before her eyes. She spurned me from her. Aye—spurned me—as disdainfully as the tiger quits, for a time, the prey upon which his satiated appetite forbids his further feasting. I

yet remember it—yes—it rankles in my heart, although my now unruffled countenance smiles upon her, to lure her on to meet the fate opportunity shall bring upon her. On this, enraged, I gave her a violent push from the cushion she was reclining on; for I was reckless—burning with impatience—and heated with deadly hate—a hatred that time shall not cure. With my intemperance, I need scarcely repeat, originated her misfortune and after illness. However, I cannot help again laughing, on the recollection of the *tumasha** which followed. The old man, drowned in tears, whilst I stood by consoling him, and bid him meet misfortune with resignation—the affrighted domestics—the roaring and screaming of the female attendants—now partially lulled, and now again bursting forth upon the ear of night, with their renewed efforts at extravagance; in fine, such a confusion was never witnessed before. Hah, hah, hah, I must again repeat the surfeit of laughter at the old man's beard, I then inwardly enjoyed. I say I must,

* *Tumasha*.—Spectacle.

and Hah, hah, hah, may Allah help me, or I shall die; yes, Hah, hah, hah, die I shall. The arrival of the jadooghurs, their performances, and well known bad characters, now came to aid my cause.

“ Seeking for Murdan, I communicated my suspicions, that they must have performed jadow* on his pregnant wife. I then suggested preferring a suitable complaint, to which I gained his consent, and by my insinuations made him quite enthusiastic to obtain. And, wah! wah! shabash! the bastinado made cabobs of their livers, and skinned their feet. The Cazi, well knew his business, and what he wanted on this occasion to complete his education, the soft touch of gold furnished. It was in vain they protested. Justice was deaf; aye, deaf, Moollah Ibrahim, as I was to their screams.

“ Was it not a master-piece to achieve? and why, after such a victory, should we for a moment suppose, that our cunning should fail against the insinuations of an upstart. Besides, I shall begin, from this hour, to estrange the uncle’s

* *Jadow*.—Witchcraft.

mind from the nephew ; whose late hours furnish means sufficient for jealousy, once awakened, to feed upon. Or if not, I will invent others for that purpose." Here he was interrupted by his companion :—

" You are always," said he, " revelling in the recollections of things gone by. Would to God, you would banish them from your mind, or abstain from recapitulation, for suppose we were overheard? What signifieth the shadow, when the substance is gone? Take heed, that such is not all, which remains to you, ere long, if you are thus heedless. Recollect, the object of my requesting this meeting, was to concert with you, and embody for immediate execution, such measures as our united prudence might suggest ; and if the fakeer and Rustum Khan should once awaken that jealousy towards ourselves, which you represent as baneful to others, may it not be so in our case? Reflect a moment, and contrive, or we are lost ; let our safety engross our undivided attention. Sooner than be caught in my own toils, and have my pleasures thus suddenly curtailed, I must spread my nets elsewhere, and relinquish all former conquests. Yes,

indeed, now that security begins to abandon our cause, and the searching sun of interference threatens to open wide the pods of our ripened plans, and discover the seed of our inventions, in like manner as time and sunshine acts upon the vegetable which produces grain, I must say, I repent having gone so far. I should be sorry to lose the fair fame, which I now enjoy, and be unmasked so soon. The fakeer and that hurum-zadeh Rustum Khan, (may the eye of the evil one be upon them, and the tongue of slander against them) have, I can assure you, determined to observe all secrecy in their proceedings, and you may depend upon it, Moollah Hachim, that when they make the attempt against our characters, which they plot, detection must ensue. How can it be otherwise? and thus will inevitable ruin accrue to us. What can be done? I say, what can we do?"

"I advise pressing on," said the one spoken to. "Banish all hesitation. What will receding effect? If blood must be spilt, be it so. Now we have once descended from the dignity of our religious character, we must be content to be knaves. Let us adopt the latter, and act to perfection the part

we have chosen. Either one or the other for me. Say which, and I am decided. Take your choice, friend. I trust in fate ; it is a good shield against cowardice : it nerves the hand to seek revenge. I feel its impulse even now within me, and could my sight gaze upon my enemies, ere sunset the haze of death should surround their prying eyes, and we should sing requiems for their souls, to pacify old Murdan Khan. Aye, aye, cold and dark should be their bed, or, if the Sabermuttie was at hand, it should wash off all imperfections, and bear them onwards on their road to paradise. I am resolved, and will not shrink from my purpose, once decided on ; what say you ? If Rustum Khan and the fakeer observe us so closely as you insinuate, let us remove them from the scene altogether. And although they wish to deny us the enjoyment of terrestrial houries, let us ensure them those of the better world. I say, shall it be done ?”

“ How can we effect it ? Perhaps your ingenuity can answer this, Hachim, Dast. No time must be lost, for they are about to leave Ahmedabad in a few days, so Murdan

Saheb told me the other night, when, over cal-leons and coffee, I was fixing his belief in our sincerity. If once allowed to escape, and Rustum Khan, mark me, should tell his father, I know him too well, to suppose that the game can be kept up. Neither could good fortune, fate, religion, nor I believe Allah himself, ward off the consequences of his unerring resentment. Then, indeed, victims must we be, and may prepare for the bastinado, the whip, and every disgrace that can be heaped upon us. Even death will be withheld from us, you may be certain, lest the torture he would wish to inflict should be arrested. No, by Allah ! my very limbs tremble at the thought. I wish we were once clear from this city. What think you of feigning the necessity of a sudden departure from Ahmedabad, which would cost little trouble and less explanation, and might suffice for the present?"

"No, I do not think it would," replied the other, "and if on the contrary, I would not adopt it. Compulsion I hate: the tiger fears not the jackall. What, am I now to forswear what has cost me such numberless hours of thought? What coward

are you, to advise me to relinquish that, which has plunged me in such iniquities, as close the door of hope against me in this world, if detected. No, never will I listen to such a proposition. Is the hawk to be scared, I ask, at the appearance of the pigeon. No, I am resolved; by the blessed koran, I swear! by the sacrifice of behist, by the beard of every saint or sinner, (it little signifieth which to me) to crush the chance of any information against myself, by obtaining the death of those, who seek my shame. Will you assist; if not, you can perhaps devise some scheme, better fitting your grovelling mind. But I shall move home."

"Wait but a moment, I say," ejaculated the other: "as yet, blood has never stained my hand. Give me a minute's consideration, I beg. If it must be so, let my remorse subside; and with eyes and heart I am yours. A little poison, administered in the pan leaf, will suffice to silence the miscreants for ever. A few agonies on the part of the sufferers, which I shall not feel; no, they shall have them all to themselves; hah, hah, they shall: a well-feigned grief on our

countenances, to damp the joy which would otherwise flush them, and then an assiduous attention during the dying moments, cannot fail to clear us from any imputation. What is your opinion, friend? Hah, hah, hah? I say, give me your ideas upon my suggestions. Are they those of a grovelling mind! I should rather say, you erred in that expression. Come, confess, be candid,—oh yes, by the sacred blood of my forefathers they die, they die!” and as his voice broke forth, it heightened into a demoniac laugh. “They die. Hah, hah, hah! Death is their reward.”

“Stay, stay,” said Moollah Hachim, “why you would arouse a whole village.”

“No, no, I am resolved,” continued the other. Hah, hah, hah!—they die, the villains, rascals, base-born knaves—they die, they die.”

“Stop again,” rejoined Moollah Hachim, “for the love of Allah, hold your tongue and hear me. I have it exactly.

“The late murder which occurred in one of the mosques of the unfortunate Merwan and his wives, by the Bheels, when at prayer, and which

happened near the city, furnishes an admirable plan for our adoption. Let us invite them to prayer at Deria Khan's tomb, or to a feast, it signifies little which ; have assassins at hand to strike that blow, which it will be easy to ascribe to others. We can slightly scratch ourselves, and during the scuffle, make pretence of resistance. Our trusty servants will be near, and the only witnesses of the transaction, as I shall manage it. They can augment our perfect indifference, into an interference on the behalf of those attacked, and thus in lieu of ignominy attaching to ourselves, praise must ensue. What say you ? Our characters must be enhanced, as surely as we doom them to death."

" Thus let it be. To this I will consent, for die they must."

The two confederates now left the scene of their impious plot, hastened a few hundred yards from the bowrie, to a spot where we saw them mount their horses, and eventually take the direction of the city, turning round at intervals to see if they were watched or followed."

The moonshee had, during the whole of this

evening, evinced every anxiety ; huge drops of perspiration stood upon his brow : his hookah was entirely forgotten, whilst his eye rested upon the Mahommedan, turning, as he turned in every direction, and opening into a stare at intervals. “ Khoda Kurreem,” and “Allah Acbar,” were his constant ejaculations, whilst with dilated nostrils and open mouth, he extended his head as near to the narrator, as his bent back would admit of. Every now and then, a shudder shook his frame, insomuch so, that I could not resist jesting him upon the subject of his eager curiosity.

My guest now rose. Mahomed offered him another goblet of sherbet : he drank it, gave me his benediction, pronounced his Khoda Afiz,* thanked me for my welcome, and descended the stairs, then mounted his horse. My mussaulchie or torch bearer, was in attendance, to light him on his way ; so that, in a few minutes, a perfect stillness reigned throughout this once sumptuous palace, and the peaceful inmates of it courted repose.

* *Khoda Afiz*.—Farewell.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(Night the Third.)

“THE second evening’s narrative buoyed up our hopes a little. With my tutor so much so, that whilst we awaited Rustum Khan’s coming, he could not help reverting to it.

There is more interest in my countryman’s narrative than I was led to anticipate, from his abrupt manners at the tomb of Khan Mahomed Jung. By heavens,” he ejaculated, “he has seen more of the world than I can boast of having done, and put up with it better too, for if I had known my life was the object of another’s desires who intended to take it, I think I should have anticipated him, by fair or foul means, and insured my own safety in his destruction. But

here he is; Mahomed, you may remove that calleoon, I shall not require it. Here he comes, Saheb. Welcome him I beseech of you." I did so, and he soon began his narrative, after a pause in which he refreshed himself with the hookah, his horsekeeper, had, on this occasion, brought for his own convenience.

"When I left you last night," continued the Mahommedan, "I believe I had just reached that eventful period of my life, when the all-merciful Allah deigned, so to direct my footsteps, on the last day of the Mohurram, as to guide me in discovering the design of Moollah Hachim, and Moollah Ibrahim, to murder myself and my companion. When meditated by two such villains as the moollahs, it was surely a matter of dread to those upon whom their vengeance was to descend. Such, indeed, was their intention; but how weak the power of man is, when the Lord designeth to frustrate him. Can man design aught, which the Author of his being cannot circumvent, or counteract? As soon, however, as the two wretches had fairly departed, the fakeer and myself looked around us, and stole carefully

from our hiding, immediately the tramp of their horses had faded away from our hearing.

It was evident my companion seemed but little to relish the conversation, he had so accidentally overheard; his feelings were so worked upon, that he started at the rustling of the leaves; he gazed upon me with an eye expressive both of fear and anxiety. His limbs shook whilst the energy of his mind appeared equally subdued. At length, trembling with fear he exclaimed, "Is it thus my life is to terminate? Can the providence of God intend to suspend its operation in my behalf, when age has weakened that strength of mind and courageous feeling which animated my youthful years? No, never, surely it cannot be so. Is my face to be bent towards paradise, by such untimely means? am I to become a martyr, because the sins of others call for concealment? Yah Khodah, thou art greatest, and why not chastise those whose sins have made them hateful to thy sight? and upon whom thy ire ought to descend with every curse.

"I wish I had never accompanied you hither, Rustum Khan; for how can I, after what these

few last moments have disclosed to my knowledge, partake of my daily food within the precincts of your uncle's dwelling, without fear of poison, which will be in some manner mixed with it. No, Inshallah, I will regain my dwelling as soon as possible; I will not stay here; God forbid that aught may happen to prevent my quitting a spot so hateful to my eyes, and where the very dust raised by our footsteps is fraught with injury to ourselves, or poisoned with invective. Why should I stay here? no, by the beard of the blessed Peighumber,* before morning prayers to-morrow, I will turn my back upon Ahmedabad, aye, before one of the five regulated numaz shall have been performed by the most enthusiastic follower of our persuasion. I will arrive, with the aid of his mercy, to open the lock of the door of my habitation, where peace and security are inmates. There will I enjoy quiet, augmented as a blessing, by the contentment I there can indulge."

"Go, when and how you feel disposed, friend," I retorted, in a sarcastic tone of voice,

* *Peighumber*.—A Prophet; one bearing a message.

which seemed to embarrass him, "but can you reconcile to your mind leaving your companion in the hour of distress. If so, be gone, I say, the counsels of a coward are hurtful to the brave. Such, ought not to be the case with you, for how often have you not enjoined me to meet adversity with firmness, and now you shrink! As for myself," I continued, "nothing shall draw my attention from the revenge I am anticipating. It shall, it must be completed, or I am crushed in the attempt. Be it a winning or a losing game, I am indifferent to the result. Anticipation of defeat, is not far removed from defeat itself. The risk be on my head, not on yours. With the help of fate, and a firm reliance in the mercy and power of Allah, what am I not able to achieve, or what ought I not to subdue? What can grey beards and heads, such as the moollahs', sunk in infirmities, and whose minds are operated upon by their guilty consciences, avail against the arm of youth, untouched with the withering blast of unrighteous dealings, with his neighbours. Neither have I slandered my friend—abused his hospitality—broken in upon his happiness—or

hurt him in word or thought; and am I to stand back upon the approach of danger, from the hands of those, whose greatness, solely rests on sin and murder. No! never; mark me, I shall await their impotent fury. Now I am upon my guard, how can they injure me. Again, where is their secret now? God is merciful, I can repeat with Moollah Ibrâhim, and he will yet learn that God is just too. No, sooner than remove hence, at this crisis, I would, that the fair fame of my noble father might be plucked from him and his descendants for ever—that every prospect of happiness the future has in store for me, might be blighted, or dispersed as effectually, as the morning vapours, vanish under the influence of the rising sun. Talk not to me of removing hence,” I added, and then turned from my companion. This had the desired effect. The first panic of the fakeer, which had vexed me in the moments of astonishment, had time to subside, and my resolution to abide, at all hazards, seemed to impart some portion of my confidence, to his doubting mind. His exertions, if once gained in my behalf, I knew could be depended upon, and as

such, I was determined, if possible, to secure them, or at least, to struggle to retain him in my cause. Besides, although he drew so deplorable a picture of himself in his tottering years, it was far from true to the original. His naturally robust frame, had been tried with every hardship, and withstood the proof. His youthful labours, and the wandering life of an enthusiast which he had adopted, had inured him to support, with becoming ease, what would have overwhelmed others. Moreover, much yet remained to him of physical force, but this was of little consequence, when compared with the value his experience gave to his advice. When acting at the instance of his counsel, or following his injunctions, I knew I should, on all occasions, feel double confidence to that, which my own unassisted endeavours could ever inspire me with."

"What would you have me do?" said the trusty, faithful man, with tears in his eyes. "What would you that I do, Rustum Khan? I have seen your youth flourish, and with feelings of delight too; I love you as though you were my son: feel not offended with me: I am old, and my feelings

weakened, but I cannot, will not desert you ; command me in what manner you desire, ask what you will, but taunt me not with reproach ; I am ready. A few years of life are all that I can count upon, and this I ought to have considered, and should, if time had been granted me. Better sacrifice them, than see the promising bud of youthful vigour, blighted in its early growth. Let the fiends grasp me in their clutch, I care not, a few blows—and all will be over. Your father, again, might live to mourn your loss, whereas, if I perish, there is not one, now existing, from whom my memory can claim, or has a right to exact, a tear. No ! Let the sickle reap the corn, which is fit for gathering, I say. Command my services, as freely as you grant your own, in this just cause. Let me hear your determination, young man, I will respect it. What do you intend to do ? and what course of conduct do you propose to pursue ?”

“ It is my intention,” I replied, with warmth, “ at all events, to accede to any proposal they may think fit to make to me. In accepting your services, as the affair stands now, advice is more the object of my wishes, than any personal exer-

tion on your part; for to expect that, would be as extravagant, my friend, as unjust to you. You must confess that age, though weak in prowess, is still strong in thought; and can you blame me for wishing to secure yourself, whom experience has made a sage of, as my principal director? If blood is to be shed, be that my task to execute. Little would mercy for the moollahs stay my hand. No, by God! by Allah! it shall be extended to the fullest against them. Banish all fear as to the result, and nerve yourself to meet it. Remember, if you should approve it, we will meet at the caravanserai we first alighted at, and where we spent so restless a night, after mid-day prayers, to-morrow, and there discuss more freely, the expedients necessary to be adopted, lest we hasten into the toils spread for the unwary. Let us now, however, speed our way to the city, for here we are never safe. Indeed, when standing under the very gates of Ahmedabad, with such insufficient guards as those who now mount over its safety (on whom may curses light), little dependance can be placed in such a situation. Even there,—beware of the assassin, for danger

lurks in every hole and corner throughout these provinces. We had better regain our homes with expedition, lest we fall in, with any of those numerous parties of plundering Bheels, who patrol the country, and whom we may, with reason, anticipate meeting."

"So let it be, and let us avoid appearing in public together," replied the fakeer, "as it may raise suspicion."

In a short time we were once more welcomed, by the door-keeper, with a low salaam, as we entered the precincts of old Murdan Khan's abode. How deceitful are appearances; all was still and quiet there. It might have passed, from external show, for the abode of multiplied happiness; and yet within this enclosure, every heart which beat in the breast of human beings, was either corroded with care, or burning with anxiety. The moollahs had returned, but were absent. Moreover, I found, upon inquiry, that they had been asking for ourselves, and even gone in search of us. The evening twilight, so feeble in this country, had spread her grey mantle over the small court-yard, relieving the wearied eye, in the composed appearance of every thing

around, from the fatiguing glare, reflected from the stuccoed walls of the dwelling, which was almost beyond endurance during the mid-day hours. After having been exposed to the rays of the sun, the approach of evening, in India, is a luxury not to be disregarded, and which, I dare say, you seldom refuse to enjoy on horse-back, Saheb. I had no time to lose, however, and now sought out Abdoollah, and having retired with him, to a situation free from all possible observation, in a kubberistan, adjoining a mosque, I there disclosed to him, without any reserve, the events of the day.

“Ustugferillah,” exclaimed the old fellow, in surprise, “what do I hear? Is it possible chance has unmasked these smooth-faced ruffians? Ul-hum—dulillah! but the hand of Allah has befriended us, most opportunely, in the discovery you have made. Well, saith the sage, ‘The net of infamy may be spread, but who can command a victim to be entrapped, if not ordained in the fate engraven on our foreheads.’ Yah, Khoda, who could believe it? and these are expounders of the Koran!—how sadly different are they, from

that blessed man, who undertook his journey to paradise from your father's house. Let them cloak their designs as much as possible, but depend upon it, they shall be defeated. By heaven! aye! by my father's beard! I swear, if effort can ensure success, it shall not be withheld. What then, Khodavind, *they* seek *your* life, do *they*, Shabash? To seek is not to find always—wah—wah—but let me assure them the flower of your existence must be plucked from among thorns. Old as I am, let him, who dares, raise against your life the thirsting steel; and by the blessed Peighumber, may he nerve my arm with vigour to carry into execution what I design, I swear to see the deed avenged. Aye, aye, yes,—listen to me. Hear me swear, oh, Allah! and give firmness to him who swears, that I may extirpate a whole race of such hypocrites, sooner than one drop of your blood shall remain unrevenged. I once could wield a weapon, and I think its constant use has imprinted a hint or two upon my memory, which I can yet avail myself of. Let them beware, the villains; this aged arm, once bared in your defence, my

lord," and he stretched it forth, "will, by heart-felt affection for yourself and family, be stimulated with vigour in the hour of need. Come on, ye villains! would to God ye were here," and he unsheathed his weapon. "Come on, I say, and reap a victory. Yah, Ullah, I feel I am not quite so crippled as I thought, Khodavind. When in the heat of battle, what can a twitch or two of rheumatism effect? nothing, I say." "Patience, my friend, patience, Abdoolah," I exclaimed, in haste, "silence, let me command you to speak with less fervour, or you will alarm, in your phrenzy, the whole neighbourhood; wait but a moment, and hear me."—"That will I do," said the old man. "But can I forget the salt I have eaten? Never, I say."—"Silence, and a seeming unconsciousness of all that has passed," interrupting him, I added, "is our certain road to success. You remember well the serai, whence you rescued us to guide us hither; be there to-morrow, after mid-day prayers, when you shall receive your instructions in this affair. The fakeer will be there also. But mark me, be cautious you are not watched, and do not come

along with him. The assembly must collect from different quarters. What farther progress we have made, will be there revealed to you, and every thing put in a train to prevent failure. Can I depend upon your keeping secret, what I have disclosed to you, and on your not failing me in what I shall require.”—“Be it what it may, master, even unto death,” said the noble old fellow, with becoming warmth, “can I be wanting in my service to yourself or family? Have I ever been so? Who left you, let me ask, a father, to take care of you, when the murdering Mahratta sought his life, and his pierced and indented armour would have betrayed him? Was it not my arm, that severed the head of his foe from his idolatrous body, and left him on the plain, a meal for jackalls? Be true to you—will I not—am I forgetful of the salt I have eaten in your father’s house these last thirty years, that I should be unmindful of your orders?”

“Recollect I allude to, and expect nothing more from you at present,” I said, “than that my wish, that you be present to-morrow at the place appointed, and at the time I have proposed to you,

shall be complied with. Do this and I am fully satisfied.”—“ Let your desires lead me on to inevitable destruction, I will perform them with eyes and heart,” said my servant.—I now quitted him, and wandered up and down the court-yard until the usual group, after a short time, (which I employed in subduing the excitement of my feelings) was again assembled, as on every preceding evening : the moollahs had returned and joined us; coffee was brought, and also our calleons. Mine however, was, I suppose, forgotten by Abdoollah, in his phrenzied feeling of anger ; for after waiting a considerable time, he failed to appear. The moollah, Ibrahim, to whom one just prepared had been presented, offered it to me, with every courteous word upon his lying tongue. On my refusing his kindness, a frown clouded his brow, and it was handed back to the servant who had prepared it for him, on a plea of his not feeling disposed to indulge himself in this particular, at present. Our host, as was customary with him, was lost in his general confidence, and bewailing as bitterly as ever, the number of years he had lived, without the blessed happiness of a

child, on whom to lavish his affection. "I begin to despair at length," he exclaimed, with a sigh. "What avails my wealth, Moollah Hachim, friend, I say, if I am to have no family to distribute it amongst, when taking my farewell on my death-bed. Oh God! avert such a misfortune! that I should continue with only hope to cheer me on; for I cannot endure this suspense much longer." "That cannot be," continued Moollah Hachim, "if our pious endeavours can avail anything in our benefactor's cause. Do you think it possible, most reverend Ibrahim, that our intercessions can for a moment, be unavailing? For my part, five times each day, do I solicit from heaven, the grant of your uncle's desires, Rustum Khan, and indeed," he added, with a jesting tone, "I am almost afraid, I am forgetful of ever soliciting anything in my own behalf, so completely am I engrossed with all relating to his affairs. The burthen of gratitude to him, may he be blessed, can alone be lightened in this way, and whether I suffer or not hereafter for any negligence in my own cause, I care little, if I can but gain him the long sought alleviation of that corroding care

which cankers his existence, and blinds him to the pleasures of this life, which are, indeed, but few.” —“ Such are the words I should have uttered,” added Moollah Ibrahim, “ immediately, had it fallen to my happy lot to be particularized in your conversation, Moollah Hachim, with our mutual protector. Have we a wish, or object to obtain from him which is ever refused, when asked for? No! I say, never,—may peace surround him and his for ever.”

“ It does not become me to say how I endeavour for his welfare;” said the person spoken to.” “ What think you, Rustum Khan, Saheb? does it?” “ No, it does not,” I replied, sarcastically, “ and that curses may light upon *those* who would injure my uncle, shall ever form a portion of my prayer. This is due, in return for his hospitality; and if any one should abuse his confidence, trample on his rights, or infringe upon his privacy, I am much mistaken if it should not, when known to me, ensure him a just reward.”—A scrutinizing and mutual glance from the two moollahs, directed to my person, followed my speech. Already my feelings were

fast gaining a mastery over my intentions. I began to hesitate whether I should at once crush them with shame or not, in disclosing fully what had transpired. I knew full well that I could produce the fakeer, in corroboration of my representation, but then the consideration of the more pleasing and ample revenge which I anticipated, after a short delay, enabled me to resist the temptation. That present was an inopportune moment. I strove to combat my irritation; the conversation took a turn favourable to my endeavours, in adverting to the festival of the Mohurram, and saved me from yielding myself up thus unguardedly, when fired with animosity, to the anxiety I entertained to betray them. Luckily I was not entrapped into a confession of the secret knowledge I had obtained, before the fitting time.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(Third Night continued.)

I had a passing glance of a fairy face ; I became inflamed to madness with her love. What is her name, where her abode ? I know not.

YET, how difficult was the task I had assigned myself. To have to check my desire to speak, when my overcharged heart threatened to burst if it were not eased ; and then again, to couch my language, when I indulged in it, in an appropriate mystery, so that, whilst it stung the offenders to the quick, it was poisoned with doubt, and added uncasiness to the severity of a taunt. I thought it must, it would have overcome me ; indeed it was almost too much for me to contend against. My blood, in its rushing haste,

threatened to burst the channels of communication, it had before comparatively slumbered in. My temples beat, my eyes must have been blood-shot, whilst my heart pulsated, doubly quick and strong, and my anger, in its rising, almost choked me. And yet, I was forced to suffer all, and keep a salutary rule over my words and actions.

During my whole life-time, few indeed have been the hours, to compare in intense anxiety with those, the events of which I am now describing. Up to this period, although ignorant of the degree of guilt of the two moollahs, yet my situation was rendered irksome in the extreme, from a supposition, that dishonour was heaped upon my relative. But, when the full measure of their cunning was, as on this evening, displayed before my astonished conscience, how could I reflect upon such an accumulated mass of villainy and treachery, without shuddering. Moreover, to see an old man injured and imposed upon, by those, who preserved a fulsome exterior of wishing him well, coupling the same in language, which to me, after their conversation had betrayed them, was perfectly intelligible, and

equally obnoxious—it was past endurance. I am at a loss, and doubtless you are, Saheb, to conjecture how the voice of accusation became stifled within me. He had befriended me, he had opened the stores of his liberality, and bestowed the fondest favours of affection on me; and yet I saw him in the snare, and withheld my help from him. My conduct must have arisen from the restless disposition of my youthful age. Whilst it, on the one hand, debarred me from entertaining any decided measure, on the subject of emancipating the relative I owed so much to, from the thralldom he laboured under, the warning voice of the fakeer restrained my impatience to close on the other. However, certain it is, that I could not, at the moment, devise any scheme, which was allowed to be matured with the genial warmth of patient consideration. It must not be supposed, it arose from disinclination so to do, for, young as I then was, I was acutely alive to any injury sustained, and indifferent to the manner of retorting it.

It oft reminds me of my youthful pastimes. The overreaching anxiety of those moments, recalls the scenes of my most boyish occupations

from the oblivion of the past. Often have I planted, in the court-yard of my father's dwelling, the seed of the gourd and cucumber, and, arisen early the next morning, with the pressing anticipation of beholding a young plant budding above the surface of the ground. In this I was disappointed: and so it was with the hastily-concerted measures, to gratify my desire of wreaking a signal revenge on the moollahs, who thus trifled with Murdan Khan's reputation: no sooner was the seed of invention sown, than the fruit of success was expected.

For some time, the conversation of our evening society flowed on apparently in easy confidence; but this was destined to be reversed. The difficult part I had to sustain, rendered me more reserved than usual; which did not escape the penetrating eye of the confederates: such is guilt, when heightened with suspicion. Who can evade even unintentionally adding an ember to the consuming fire, ignited in the breast of a conscience-stricken sinner? Will not the fire-fly startle the eye, and subdue, for a moment, the courage of a horse, although its lustre is but a

spark, compared with the bright, and vivid glare, through which he has traversed in the day-time ; but the darkness of the night renders this an object of dread to him : and so it is with guilt : it loves the gloom of secrecy ; and if a transitory gleam, brighter than another, bursts suddenly forth, indicating the most remote chance of discovery, it is magnified by the sinner, paralyzes him for the instant, and he starts from it with precipitancy. How I acted my part on this occasion, how I managed to elude giving them a real clue to my injured feelings, you can best judge of, on my detailing the issue of their hopes, as well as mine ; which I cannot, at the present moment, enter upon, without anticipating the result, and breaking the thread of my narrative. No, Saheb ; tedious, prolix, and wearisome as my manner of relating my life is, I cannot avoid it, and in listening, you must learn to excuse the narrator. Mahommed, hand me my pipe, and a glass of sherbet, for the sultry heat of this evening, I think, outmatches that of yesterday. Now I am again ready.

The mid-day prayer-time having passed by, on

the following day, I sought, after making a considerable circuit, the promised interview of my friends at the caravanserai. My own was the first arrival, the fakeer next, and Abdoollah the third. It was resolved between us, that the better plan for our adoption, presented itself in urging the moollahs, to put in practice the scheme, they had devised in our hearing, lest upon reflection they might adopt another more secret in itself, and more likely to prove fatal, inasmuch as ignorance on our part would deprive us of opportunely offering sufficient precaution to be at all available in behalf of our safety. "But," added the old fakeer, "listen to me, I am somewhat experienced. In the event of a proposal for a feast being made to you, Rustum Khan," and he laid his hand emphatically upon my shoulder, "by the moollahs, you will have a nice discrimination to observe on your part. Beware, lest you advance beyond the bounds of prudence, in harbouring an undue impatience to bring matters to a crisis. If you do so, every flattering hope you entertain, will be inevitably succeeded by disappointment. Take it coolly, like the traveller who has a long jour-

ney before him. Save yourself over exercise, and curb your animal at the outset. When the wily moollah waits upon you—you understand—to solicit your condescension, and invite you, harbour a little caution. Exhibit the restless impatience of a boy—counterfeit frank and open compliance, but—above all, fail not to raise a few objections, with becoming warmth, and let them appear from your manner insurmountable—such as the necessity of proceeding home at once, dilating at the same time, on your father's peremptory character, and how much you fear falling under his displeasure, whose punishment is as severe, as his anger is unappeasable.

“ This will enhance their eagerness to strike the blow at once, lest you should escape, and place a value on immediate despatch, which they will not fail to estimate, more especially as they look upon your father already with a fearful eye.”—“ For the present, you, Abdoollah,” said I, addressing my menial, “ will have to keep a strict watch over their actions; and you, my friend and steady adviser, shall communicate to him the farther orders I will give you, after another conference

with you on this important subject. If Abdoolah—do you hear me—you can bribe any of the female attendants, who wait on the ladies of Murdan Khan's Zenanah, fail not to do so, as I should not be surprised if the villains, when acting their favourite part, of lovers, disclose some of their intentions to them. Away, away, my friends, we must not tarry here.”—Leaving the caravan-serai immediately, and being fully occupied with planning against my enemies, and talking to myself as I proceeded, I walked on perfectly regardless of the way I traversed. My attention weaned from the objects around me, prevented my discovering, until too late, that I had, in these moments of abstraction, taken another route to that I had intended pursuing. Passing under a gateway, I had scarcely proceeded twenty paces, when a shrill and sudden shriek, followed by loud female screams, aroused me from my lethargy. Thinking it was the high road I was traversing, I drew my sword to render that assistance, which I considered the noise was intended to summon. I now found out my mistake, and had nearly been a sufferer from my negligence. I had, it appeared, unconsciously

strayed into the private dwelling of a rich Mahomedan, who preferred the solitude of this sequestered quarter of the city.

Between his residence, and the arched gateway I had entered by, was a portion of garden ground, which my activity soon traversed over. "A man, a man, a stranger! Fly, fly,—gather your robe over your face. He still advances, the daring monster; why we must encounter him. Here, turn this way," echoed on all sides, succeeded by fresh screams, and loud vociferations. "The dauntless villain! clothed too like a Mahomedan. Some daring idolator, doubtless, but we will unmask him. Call the furoshes; inflict the bastinado; check the impertinent fellow's career at once, or he will enter the dwelling along with us. Quick, despatch, strike him I say, or, here is a matchlock, shoot him!" I was now assailed by the domestics, who, had I not been armed, would certainly have soon carried into effect the orders given by an old virago, whose incessant roar, and rapid speech, threatened me so violently.

"Pause for a moment," said I, "call your master, or any one but that shameless old hag, to

listen to the voice of explanation, and I will raise it in my defence." One of the servants quitted, and immediately afterwards, a noble-looking young man approached, and when, within hearing, begged me to explain the reason of my intrusion.

"I can give no satisfactory account of myself whatever, I much regret to say," I rejoined, "and can only express my sorrow, that when overcome by thought and intense excitement, I should have so infringed upon established customs, as to have entered, where the ladies of your household were within sight. Nothing I am aware can be more highly improper, than what I have been guilty of." "A pretty tale indeed," said the old, withered, lean, crabbed-faced looking woman, to whom I have already alluded, "a pretty tale indeed. Here, and without any reason for it, except that his thoughts engrossed his attention. Doubtless they did; let us know in what they were centered, my gay adventurer. Thoughts, indeed! Ya Ulahi, his tongue is over inventive; its removal might do no harm. Do not for a moment believe it,

Yunis Khan ; you, as master of the house during your father's absence, owe much to your family, and ought to be most scrupulous ; besides, having so beautiful a sister as your father's daughter, you ought, surely, to inflict a punishment on this offender. They say, the Mowrah tree, when laden with ripening berries, is the resort of every bird of pleasure. Perhaps a few blows may enable him to furnish us with some account of his impertinent behaviour. Just try them, if only to compensate me for the loss of my breath, and your sister for the hurry and scamper she was forced to adopt. No doubt, this is he that keeps me watching by night, in this sultry and rainy weather, to prevent, at your father's request, the chance of the person who constantly annoys us with his love songs and sitarrhe music, from having any interview with his family. Yah Khoda, that alone demands the infliction of the bastinado, and you may depend upon it the pain will elicit a note or two from our musical friend, when I shall detect him in a moment. I have his voice quite by heart, having listened for hours, and strained my eyes in the direction

it came from, to distinguish the swain if possible. Never mind his bravado. A daring face, and a coward's heart, is one of our proverbs. Try it upon him. If this is the man, a sound beating will prevent his coming again, and if not, the rumour of our activity may serve to deter the other."—Inwardly cursing the old hag in my heart, I could not but feel ashamed of myself, in the extreme. What could I say, in hopes of conveying a conviction, of the truth of my thus finding myself in my present predicament. Now deeming one measure most prudent—and then again relinquishing it, I continued standing before the young man, abashed to the utmost. An attempt at an excuse was at length made, and to my surprise, succeeded beyond all hope.

"Let him go this time, brother," said a female voice from within, "I am sure you would not wish to punish one, who confesses himself an unintentional offender."

Here the old woman again burst forth, but was silenced at the command of her, who spoke in my behalf.

"If he is much longer delayed, consider, we

may be surprised by my father's arrival, and then the consequences of his anger are to be dreaded." The tone,—the mild soothing manner in which this kind interference for one in my unpleasant situation was communicated, fixed on my mind for ever. It bespoke a genuine warmth of heart, which kindled a corresponding feeling in mine towards her who had displayed it. Although she was unknown to me, the accents of her voice fell upon my hearing, mild and melodious, and commanded my respect. But it was in vain that I endeavoured to gain a glimpse of her. Being permitted to depart without any hostility, I lingered on my way, eagerly endeavouring to obtain such a view of the building, (from ever again entering which, I had been warned by the young man) as might enable me in after times, to retrace my steps to the spot, if I desired it; for I must confess, I had already conceived more passion for this unknown female, than either accorded with sense, or could tend to allay my curiosity to behold her, before I departed. How I longed to linger in that garden, which before I had traversed with so much haste, at the instance of hu-

manity. But no, I dared not do it: although my excited fancy dwelling upon her, now painted her as a beauty to my imagination; and now, again, added grace, elegance, and stature, as its accompaniments, in order to overwhelm me with anxiety.

Dwelling now upon love as fully as I before had upon the chances of revenge, I at length turned down a lane to my right, and now the house was close at hand. My scrutinizing glance brought the whole within its compass in a moment—and oh, my joy! On the terraced roof, paraded one of the most beautiful young women I had yet ever beheld.

It might be her, I reflected; conviction of its being so, soon followed my first surprise, and I was in a thrill of delight. Her form was light and graceful; her arm, as she raised the folds of her raiment, (which had been blown off by the wind) and threw them over her head, to hide her face, quite enslaved me. I caught but a momentary glance at her features. Yah Khoda, at that alone, my senses almost forsook me. I was in a fever of delight, and would have given the pos-

session of the seven heavens in exchange, for one look of condescension. And what a waist ! to gaze on it was to be enchanted. Her noble manner, the graceful ease of her movements, all conspired to kindle that flame within me, which makes fools of the wisest and most learned of mankind ; turns the gayest hearts for a time into the most sad, and often mocks the wishes of many, when fed into ungovernable fury. I lingered for a space to gaze upon her, which flew swiftly as the arrow, at the twang of the bow,—raised my hand to my burning forehead, and then obeyed the sign she gave me to depart.

Where now remained in my mind, one thought of the moollahs, their schemes, my counterplots, the imminent danger my life was likely to be exposed to, or of the late meeting with my associates ! On her whom I had so miraculously seen, whose exquisite beauty had enchanted me—on her alone, my ideas rested. How could it be otherwise ? the phrenzied feeling of loving to admiration, had overtaken me, as suddenly as unexpectedly. It found me at the moment unprepared to combat its attacks, either with patience,

or to subdue its violence with reason. I was a victim at once, without a struggle in my own defence. Again, you must consider, that I had been awakened from the contemplation of sin and guilt, and hurried from the maddening vortex of anxiety, into the more pleasing stream of love's excitement. When I gained the shores of delight, I gazed on youth and simplicity. It was her who had rescued me, by well-timed interference, from the opprobrium of the bastinado ; for overcome I must have been, and that too without my ever seeing her, or even asking her to plead for me. She had received my intended acknowledgment, as I passed under her sight, for her generosity towards me, with becoming modesty, and although she had beckoned me away, my vanity pleaded the necessity of her adopting such a measure, whilst its rigour was softened, by the hope, which I fostered, that it did not accord exactly with her wishes. That which is displayed in such cases as these, is not always that which is intended. This well-known fact proved a flattering balm to the wound, this action must otherwise, have conveyed to my mind.

“ But I will discover all ere long,” I mentally philosophized. “ It is not impossible that she is another’s by our laws; if so—I must banish, for ever, my designs upon her heart. If not, were heaven itself to be opposed to me, I argued my resolution to resist its interference; I was ungovernable for the time. I will either win her affections,” I ejaculated, vehemently, “ or know for certain they are already either betrothed by her parents, or fixed by her own consent. This was the first clear idea which emanated in my breast. Come what will, was my final decision; my hopes now raised, shall either be realized speedily, or for ever abandoned. But how little we know of ourselves upon such trying occasions as love developes to us. Can it be supposed that I should have considered myself bound to bend to such a revolting idea? No, sooner than have been frustrated by a rival, I should only have been stimulated, by his presence, doubly to have persevered in obtaining her. No, never, by the ever-blessed Mahomet! I would have fought to the last—struggled to the utmost of my power, to claim such a prize. Indeed, who, having once seen her, would not?

“ But if I continue a description of the chaos of confusion my mind was reduced to, it can only tend to tire you, Saheb,” said the old man, addressing himself to me. “ Doubtless you have experienced the same feeling, in some degree; if not, await it arrival, and then you will be able duly to appreciate what I have asserted. Where can we find any other passion, which, in its effects, is more violent, than the one I allude to? If the idea of disappointment, as respects an early love, is entertained, by what measure can the regret and anguish engendered in the thought, be ascertained? And if, again, danger or suffering alone presents itself as a barrier against our realising the object of our desires, what can withstand the courage, or daunt the patience, raised thus in the mind of a youthful lover, whose blood is warmed with enthusiasm of the highest order?”

Numerous were the reflections which now floated past my heated imagination, and which, at length, gave way to less pleasing impressions. With the return of evening, the recollection of my present situation and former intention, again preyed upon my mind.

I had gained my uncle's dwelling, where I

could trace in the past, nought but vexation, and the future seemed stored with calamity. When I passed under the arched gateway, my former dejection crowded upon my thoughts, bearing down my spirits in a moment. My mind might be compared to the eye of the traveller, which after feasting with delight upon fertility, is suddenly transported to the desert.—Once more we were all assembled, and sought refreshment, in conversation, coffee, and our never absent cal-leons. Armed with a sullen indifference, and banishing from my memory, as much as possible, the present posture of affairs, I began the conversation, by hinting to Murdan Khan, that it was impossible I could extend my visit to him beyond two days.

“I must then,” said I, “turn my back against your hospitality, and bend my inclinations towards my father’s dwelling. You must know I have not obtained his sanction to my coming hither, a fact which I have hitherto concealed from you, and one of our village banyans, whom I met in the city this morning, informed me, I regret to say, that he has returned home, dis-

comfited with the refusal of justice, in the matter of his claim."

"Such I anticipated; nay, what fool could have conceived otherwise than that such would be the end of his appeal," said my uncle. "If one spark of our former enthusiasm could yet be kindled into the generous flame of indignation, what sweet revenge would not accompany such a deed as this, of which your father has to complain. But I fear it cannot be. 'Tis useless to despair, and foolish to hope. You have my permission to depart; hasten to his dwelling, cheer up his mind, it is the duty of a son. Oh! that I had one. And if further aggression takes place, on the part of that accursed Mahratta, be you, in your young days, what I have been, under the impulse of wrongs sustained. Carry fire and devastation into the property of the offender, pause not to consider, reflection will make cowards of us all; and let your blade be stained with the warm and kindling blood of his distended veins. But, mark me, touch not woman or child; those who cannot wield a weapon, have little right to suffer from the uplifted arm. Where defence is best

maintained, the most glory is gained in achieving a triumphant action ; but o'er those, whom sex and age alike render incapable of resistance, let generosity spread the charm of safety. You may, nay, shall depart, the day after to-morrow. I will have it so, Rustum, for I love your father, although I could not help my blood boiling within me, when I heard, at first, the reason of his going to Currie."

"Under such circumstances," Moollah Hachim remarked, "who for a moment would delay a child from hastening to obliterate from a parent's mind the anxiety which corrodes it? Again, who would hinder him from hastening to seek pardon for the fault his boyish restlessness has given rise to?—not I. Otherwise, to speak my own sentiments, I could have wished his longer stay. Your intended nuptials, my worthy protector, after the holiday of Nowroz, or New Year's Day, would have proved, unless I err in my conclusions, a pleasing sight for your nephew. The youthful mind requires festivity to feed upon. The company of such as ourselves, whom the service of the all-merciful Allah ab-

stracts from worldly enjoyment, can offer little to please the vigour and elasticity of youthful minds. As, however, he must depart without our otherwise testifying our respect for him, suppose you permit us to give him a feast at the tomb of Shah Alum at Butwah, where we will offer up prayers for his safety, at noon-day, and then he can proceed to rejoin his father. What say you?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(*Third Night continued.*)

“Examine whom you will, you will find him suffering from the same wound.”—*Persian.*

“THAT nothing better could be imagined, rejoined Moollah Ibrahim. The voice of wisdom should ever be listened to; yet, for myself, I am loath to quit the protection of the city walls, insufficiently guarded as they are. In these days, murder follows upon murder; seldom can I recreate myself in a saunter through the bazaars, but I hear the widow's wail cry, or the mother's lamentation. Men and women, old and young, are alike murdered, and children being stolen from their parents by Brinjarries, to be sold into slavery, is an every-day occurrence. The times are awful in the extreme. It was but yesterday I heard

of the absence of Moonshee Ismael, whose non-appearance at the expected hour of sunset, has raised the clamour of grief amongst his household. Well may we have recourse to prayer, Moollah Hachim, and may it prevent, in obtaining favour with the Almighty, and bringing down his help upon us, any further aggravation of guilt. Something superior to human foresight, is necessary for the safety of the traveller, now that the Bheels remain undismayed by the arm of justice, and unchecked by that of retaliation. Where can confidence be placed in such extremities as these, but in the mercy of the Omnipotent Allah? I will, therefore, accede to your proposal, although at first I dissented; but I now see my error. Our sacred characters may avail something, in offering up prayers for the safe return of Rustum Khan to his family, although, at the present moment, security is a stranger on the road he purposes travelling. You must join your endeavours with mine, Dost Hachim, so that we may get all ready by the time appointed for his departure."

"All assiduity shall be forthcoming on my

part," rejoined the one appealed to, "you may command my services, as, indeed, you always make a point of doing. Friendship, however, reconciles us a little to inconvenience, and so sincerely attached as I am to Rustum Khan, you cannot exceed, for I would enjoin no bounds to your exactions."

Having tendered my warmest acknowledgments to them for their kindness, the party broke up, and each sought his accustomed pillow. Although the day had proved to me one both of fatigue and anxiety, sufficient, on general occasions, to command a sound repose, it failed, for once, so to do—my mind was overburthened. What with the effects of love, and a knowledge of the near approach of that crisis I had so cleverly induced my enemies to rush on headlong to, I was harassed with restlessness. I courted sleep in a thousand different ways, even resorted to a little opium,—but no, it would not do. About the middle watch of night-time, the two moollahs stole secretly along the verandah, passed me, and were soon separated from the inclosure around Murdan Khan's dwelling. Their pace was stealthy, like that of the fox,

and their progress quiet as death. The durwan, whose scruples had, doubtless, long since been quieted with well-timed presents, had opened cautiously the door for them, and they departed. Their absence was more a matter of pleasure than anxiety to me; it afforded me an opportunity of conversing with my coadjutors, which my safety demanded my making use of. Stealing quietly to where they lay, I awoke them as softly as possible, drew them aside, and appointed another meeting at the serai after mid-day prayers.

“What necessity is there for that,” whispered Abdoollah to me, “the game is all our own, if you will listen to me. My old friend, the durwan, can be easily persuaded to admit of our exit; let us post ourselves favourably, and salute the moollahs with a few sabre cuts on their return. Trust it to me, I am an adept in such matters. Oh! the villains! they should have little to complain of, for I would silence their power of verbal explanation, I would put a salutary control upon their phooslawing* tongues.”

* *Phooslawing*.—Flattering—deceiving.

“Stop, stop,” I ejaculated, “the serai to-morrow, at noon, and pray now retire.” This was instantly obeyed.

Already as fully acquainted with the nature of their designs as I wished to be, it little signified whether the more immediate particulars were discovered or not. I consequently refrained from attempting to follow them, which I could easily have done, without the aid of Abdoollah’s friend, the wall being only a few feet high. The spot where I usually spread my bed, was outside and in front of the house, the upper portion of which contained the rooms appropriated as the residence of the females of the family: thus far I knew of the family arrangements, but up to this hour, I had never caught a glimpse of one of the many ladies therein concealed. Having once more reclined, and just succeeded in arranging myself comfortably, something dropped from above, and struck me full in the face; affrighted in the extreme, I jumped up, fearing it might be a snake. Aided by the moonlight, I gazed at it for a moment or two, and seeing it motionless, took it in my hand. On a nearer inspection of this

bunch of roses, I discovered a small note. This, together with the flowers, I carefully secreted about my person; for I had no opportunity of perusing the writing, and was soon lost in repose. On examining the writing, early in the morning, it contained, as I then discovered, an injunction, that I was on no account to accompany the two moollahs, as the writer heard I purposed doing:—it also explained that a design was laid against my life. At the same time, it was coupled with a recommendation that I should refrain from partaking of the victuals they would present me with, if I went, as poison would be contained therein. Again, it assured me that the chillum I had refused, had been drugged for my destruction. With such accurate knowledge displayed, it was easy to conjecture with whom the letter had originated. None but those well acquainted with the moollahs, could have acquired so much information; and who were better so, than the virtuous wives of my uncle?

On our again meeting at the caravanserai, as by appointment, it was agreed, that my faithful friend and servant should start in the evening to quiet

all apprehension, repair to Butwah, where they were to appear in disguised clothing, to avoid being discovered, and to act in concert with me, as necessity might demand.

As for myself, I again sought the spot to which my affections were rooted ; nor had I, as chance favoured me, much difficulty in reaching it. Once more I beheld the entrance to the house, which contained the object of my love. My heart beat high with expectation ; and how can I describe what I felt, when I again obtained a glimpse of the building, and then again the parapet of the terrace. Now my eye rested upon it, in hopes she might grace it with her form. Not a soul was to be seen ; and each moment, as it passed, seemed to linger on, as if to witness my despair, and fret me with disappointment. The upper rooms were shadowed in front by an elegant verandah, the roof of which rested on black marble pillars, elegantly sculptured, and of the highest polish. The interior was closed against observation, by hanging screens of light bamboo-work, lined inside with green gauze, and decorated with paintings. It must be here,

I immediately reflected, that the sanctity of the harem is upheld. Those purdahs are unerring marks by which to judge of whom they are intended to conceal. My eye was, as yet, unpractised, or, believe me, I should have at once fixed my gaze upon these particular signals. Screens are, without doubt, the most perfect guides to direct the observation of a lover to the right quarter, that could ever have been invented, and so well convinced am I of this fact, Saheb, that I only have them up myself, to mislead such youthful innocents, as might seek to steal a forbidden glance at any member of my household.—Watch a traveller going through a town, now he runs against one, now stumbles over another, and finally fixes himself and horse in a booth, because he is gazing at screens, in lieu of minding his way.—Withdrawing to a convenient distance, I remained, secured from observation, waiting for an opportunity of discovering myself, at the moment the beauteous female I had yesterday beheld, might make her appearance. Yah, Khoda, what can exceed suspense? I looked in vain! Each moment, as it succeeded, outvied

its precursor, in tarrying and delay. By heaven ! the short time I had remained there, and which appeared an age, would scarce have sufficed the most experienced soldier to combat one foe.

A Hindoo procession chanced at this time, to parade down the lane, adjoining the ruined house I had entered, and in which I was posted. The sounds of the drum, sitarrh, and horn, burst upon my hearing, and in my phrenzy, I failed not to curse them from my heart. As if fate was bent upon proving my ingratitude, up went the screens, and two females appeared. "Yah Ulahi," I ejaculated, for I could scarce contain myself at first, although reason silenced me in the end. I was ready to rush out, when at the moment, one retired. The muslin dress, fretted with gold and silver flowers, of the one, who yet tarried to feed my hopes, and the end of which having been passed over the head, served as yet to screen her from my observation, gave way to a passing gust of wind, and fell off. May my father burn, if I can describe the thrill of delight I experienced. It was her I sought after ; nature could not have gifted one of her favourites with a more perfect

beauty. Fair in complexion beyond compare ; the dark ringlets of her hair, shed more than ordinary lustre on her blooming face, whilst a languishing softness seemed lulled to repose under her eyelids, which were stained with soormah,* and fringed with remarkably long eyelashes. The depth of the forehead was heightened in expression by the arching eyebrow, and the winning smile which played about her mouth, almost made me regardless of consequences. Oh, how I longed to rush from my concealment ; but prudence forbad my so doing, and I suppose fate prevented me, for certainly, my senses were at the time, wandering.

More I had not time to make observation on ; for in my anxiety to obtain a better view of her, I at last unfortunately discovered myself. Her veil was now quickly replaced, but not ere our eyes, I shall never forget it, had mutually rested on each other.

In the glance I bestowed upon her, I swear to you, Moonshee, the most artless could, I am

* *Soormah*.—Antimony.

certain, have read an admiration, amounting almost to madness.

The blush of innocent simplicity mantled on her cheek, she turned from my gaze hurriedly, and then retired behind the screen once more. Still, I continued to watch in hopes of her return, until I gave myself up to despair.

If my last stolen glance of this exquisite beauty, had served on the preceding day to make me the slave of youthful passion, what fruits might not be expected from the occurrences of this morning. I became almost frantic, could have, indeed, almost determined to again intrude on the privacy of her dwelling, equally unprepared with satisfactory reasons for my so doing, as I was on the former occasion. But the dread of again encountering the old hag, who seemed bent on my disgrace before, held me scared.

It so happened, that just as I was retiring from my lurking place in despondency, an old woman came through the gateway, directing her steps towards me. I pressed on to avoid her, but it was of no use; she at length passed close by me, and whispered me to follow. Now winding down

a succession of lanes, and now again crossing streets, or traversing main roads, I kept following her, although her hurried flight threatened, at each turning, to distance her from my sight, until she at length entered a low hut, into which she invited me.

I instantly obeyed her wish, although, from the scowl upon her face, and her being the surly old hag whom I before had every reason to dread, I augured nothing but misfortune.

"Know," said she, "that I am the Ayah Shah of the young lady, whom your audacity has tempted you to steal unlawful glances at. Are you not aware fully of the penalty you expose yourself to? rash youth, I see a lesson is as soon effaced from your memory, as lightly received."

"Fully," I replied, "fully: and what would the knowledge of death effect, were I assured it must follow the very moment after our first interview, if such was granted me.

"Can you imagine such knowledge could deter me from seeking where happiness alone can be found. No, never. And if you have any

communication to make to me, use all expedition, for I am consuming with love." She did not reply. "But you mistake me," I added, "perhaps, for one of those licentious profligates, who make vows serve as pastimes, and who only win the affections of the softer sex to ruin them, and if so, be undeceived for once, for I am the son of an illustrious family, whom the loss of her, destined by my parents for my wife, has left a discretionary power to make choice for himself, and who would now fix it for ever on your mistress."

"This is excellent," exclaimed the old woman, in an ecstasy of joy, and clapping her hands at the same time, "kindred hearts, and both alike circumstanced—Yah Ulahi! Trust but in fate, I say, and all will be right. You cannot help it, by sigh and sorrow, or counteract it by exertion. This is what I am constantly repeating, when disappointment sits upon the brow of the beauty you adore. My mistress is in the same situation as yourself, young man, you must understand, as regards the loss of her intended partner through life. She has been as lucky as you can boast of. But a great obstacle remains against her exer-

cising her own choice in the wilful obstinacy of her father, who, I believe, intends to bestow her in marriage on an old dotard who resides in this city, but not if I can circumvent it, and receive any tempting offer so to do. You understand me."

"Perfectly," I replied, "and will answer to that part of your speech presently; but by Allah, delay not to inform me who he may be, that I may at once crush his hopes, by quieting his anxiety." I then displayed to her my sword, lest she should be ignorant of my meaning.

"And pray, may I ask, who may he be? tell me instantly; for I cannot brook delay. It surely cannot be Murdan Khan, whose residence is near the large mosque, not far distant from the Delhi Durwazeh?"

"The same, the very man, I can assure you; why, what makes you guess at him? But so it is: I am surprised. Could you believe it possible? My worthy master, whom the whole world accounts a sage, on all less important matters, wishes to play the part of a fool, and convince the world he is one, in bestowing his lovely daughter

on that old coxcomb, who, at the advanced age of sixty, becomes for the fourth time in his life, a bridegroom."

"Out upon such wanton knaves," I say, "who in filling their harem with wives, only immure the young, and cannot ever expect to live to see them blessed with progeny, although they say that is the object he has in view,—Hah, hah, hah," and she burst into a roar of laughter. "Is it true? hah, hah, hah."

"I know him well, and I regret to say it is so," I replied: "but hold; do you ever see him, or any of his friends, in pursuance of these intended arrangements? for I know some, in whom he places implicit confidence, which they know well how to abuse."

"Yes, indeed do we," said the Ayah Shah; "but wait a moment, until I again become serious, hah, hah!"

"One Moollah Hachim is his principal negotiator: oh, it is ludicrous in the extreme! He came the other day to converse with the father of my mistress. Do but listen to what I am going to tell you: yet you must forbear ever to mention it

again, as I received it in the greatest confidence, and have only revealed it to a few.

“It chanced one evening”—here again she stopped, and burst into laughter—“that, on the approach of Moollah Hachim—perhaps you are acquainted with his sanctified manner, and peculiar gait—my mistress, who was employed spinning, and on whom his gaze had fallen, thinking this would intimidate him from hastening on, refused to stir, and remained quietly seated at her occupation. Up came the moollah—and never believe me, if you find this a false tale—made love on his own behalf, vituperating his benefactor, and admonishing the semblance of the moon, as he was pleased to style the young lady, against ever marrying him; ‘for,’ said he, his harem is, in fine, nothing but a nest of wickedness and sin.’ Shocked and distressed at this account, as well as enraged at the moollah’s baseness, she ordered the furoshes* to bind him; nor did he escape without several severe blows. What think you of this? Is it not in truth a poor

* *Furoshes*.—Carpet spreaders.

reception for a lover? Oh, I shall never forget how he urged her to forgive him : but no, I had a word in the business, and managed to tickle the soles of his feet with a touch or two of the bastinado."

"What do I think of it? you ask. Why, simply this," I replied, "that it is in perfect unison with his conduct on all occasions. Base and ungrateful in the extreme as he is, any conduct, however revolting to a sensible man, if ascribed to him I could readily believe; and only would to God I had it in my power to punish him, which perchance I may have."

"Wait," said the Ayah Shah, "rest an instant; quiet yourself: to detail his infamy is not the object of my mission to you; and I have already delayed too long, considering my mistress is in love, and waits a reply. I am desired to make myself acquainted with you, and bear a confession, on the young lady's part, that you have found favour in her sight, made her lavish of her condescension—for, mark me, she is rather difficult to please—and that she wishes an interview with you to-morrow evening. Indeed, un-

less you grant her one, I shall expect to see her mad."

"How so! it cannot be!" I ejaculated with vehemence. "It cannot be! would to God it were otherwise ordained! To-morrow I quit this city, perchance never to return; and it may occur, that, ere sunset, I may be a lifeless corse! Aye, you may stare in amazement, dear Ayah Shah—but so it is! the hand of an assassin will doubtless seek my blood! If I can overcome the attack, well and good; or even parry his intentions with caution, so much the better. I will hasten to such place as you may appoint; but if fate (and to it who is not compelled to submit?) has numbered my days with the expiration of this one, all then will be past! The thought harasses me beyond compare. But go! hasten to your mistress—deplore to her, on my account, the insurmountable obstacle which prevents my according with her wishes, and refuses my indulging my own. Give her this note in proof of my assertion--it was the one I had the night before received—and bear her this golden armlet, I prize almost next to my own existence, in proof

of my affection—then if I live, and she consents, tell her the donor is ready to espouse her—to link his fortune and fame with her for ever. But now I must be gone.” I started to the entrance of the hut, and returned. “If you can pity my feelings—if you have ever known the most severe kind of grief, in the disappointments of love,” I added; “describe it to her I adore, as my case; although I much doubt its utter insufficiency to declare the bitter anguish of my mind; then try and soothe her again. Any farther message her favour may deign for the hearing of her slave, can be communicated to me by yourself, at the great mosque mentioned before, at the time of evening prayers, whither I will repair to meet you. Fail not to appear. Farewell!” With these words I placed a few rupees in her hand; she grasped them with the grip of an eagle’s talons, and hastened away.

Pondering on, and lamenting my unfortunate luck, which only granted the object of my desires, at the moment necessity demanded my relinquishing my fondest hopes, I reached the precincts of Murdan Khan’s dwelling. As I

neared, all was uproar and riot—now one voice was loudest—and now, again, many raised at once, tended to confirm the shouts which fell upon my hearing. It sometimes appeared like an angry dialogue; and at others, as if summoned at the instance of pleasure.

- I hurried on, and soon entered, where all was confusion and discord. In the front of the house, seated upon the margin of the fountain basin, sadly dejected, and crying aloud, with her hair floating loosely in the wind, and that portion of her garment removed, which ought to have formed a veil to her face, and secreted her features from the gaze of others, I found a young woman of exquisite beauty, beating her breasts with inhuman violence, and making frequent protestations of her innocence. She incessantly invoked the name of Allah, in the highest intonations her voice could command, and begged his Almighty interference in her behalf; “otherwise,” she uttered with a deep-drawn sigh, “I am for ever ruined.”

Seeing, at once, that this affair related to some private and domestic feud, I determined again

to absent myself, and had turned my back upon the assemblage collected in the interior of the court-yard.

“There he is! there he is, as I live!” burst now from one, and then from many voices; whilst Murdan Khan, infuriated beyond measure, rushed from the verandah of the house, with a drawn sword, swearing he would at once annihilate me. Retreating to a corner, in order to defend myself, I begged him to be calm for a moment, and let me know what I had done to offend him:—

“Done!” repeated the old man, as he levelled a furious cut at me—“done! what this keen scymetar seeks revenge for! Done! and would you mock this beard, whitened with age, and this head, filled with experience, by asking me such a question? Base and ungrateful boy! have you not destroyed the fair fame and virtue of my wife Noorumbie, in clandestinely becoming acquainted with her? What can you expect from the rage of a Moslem, when thus insulted? And—”

“No, I have not!” I replied, kindling with wrath at such an insinuation against my character,

and warding off blow after blow, repeated by my uncle,—“ I have not,” again and again, I exclaimed; “ I can assure you I have not.”

All was yet without avail; the blows yet showered thick upon my blade, and my uncle’s language continued also to offend my hearing and wound my feelings. My patience became exhausted.

“ Show me at once,” I exclaimed, “ the lying villain who has led you to suspect me, or produce the proofs of your assertions, and refrain from farther assaulting me, or by the beard of the prophet!—mark me—it is a solemn *kusum**; neither age nor relationship shall avail your cause. I have hoped your fury would subside, but as you seek my life so determinedly, I must protect it, by taking that part against you, which I most strenuously wish to abstain from adopting.”

The old man, somewhat daunted, now drew off, desiring me to enter the house, and explain myself. I persisted in denying compliance with his wishes, and accordingly refused to do so, as I thought those, with whom this attempt against

* *Kusum*.—Oath.

my life had originated, might employ other means against me. I knew them to be fertile in expedients, and could only hope to parry their attempts with caution.

Murdan Khan now roared, now screamed out invective against me.

“ You know not that harlot, then, I presume,” he said, whilst the smile of incredulity distorted his visage,—“ neither has she communicated by letter with you—no roses or advice—no appointment—no, not any thing. Where is the note she dropped from the upper verandah, on you, last night, after we had retired to rest—I suppose you are ignorant of it; either give it me, or see her lacerated with whips, and cut with knives, for I have an executioner ready in this pehlwan.”*

“ I know not your meaning,” I said.—“ I have explained myself in denying having any knowledge of the persons, names, or conduct of your wives. In denying having in any wise obtained an interview, with Noo-rumbie in particular, I have done all I will do:

* *Pehlwan*.—Wrestler.

if it is not sufficient, I am quite indifferent—but at the same time, let him who dares farther accuse me, or even heap injury on her, on my account, make good his deed by an appeal to truth in combat. If age or religion debars the accuser from a chance of success against me, let him find a substitute.”

“ I am your accuser !”—shouted out Moollah Hachim—and he stepped towards me at the moment. “ I heard this rumour of your guilt abroad ;—you know I *love* you, yet the sanctity of the harem must not be violated. I accept your challenge, in placing this Mahratta against you.

“ Do not delay ;—whoever prospers in this fight shall be believed, whatever statement he shall set forth !”—roared Murdan Khan.—Let the guilty party suffer, I say. Yes—let fate work upon guilt.”

“ But I fear,” replied the Mahommedan to my eager inquiries regarding the result, “ that we had better await the coming of to-morrow evening ; when, having refreshed myself, I will again renew my narrative.”

“ So much the better, my friend,” I replied—

“for believe me, I shall anxiously await your coming. Really, this evening’s relation has been one possessing to me a great deal of interest. Here, Mahomed, the pan-dan,* and let the mus-salchie be in readiness, and some one to hold a chitrie over the head of my friend.”

“Khoda Afiz!”† resounded throughout the palace; and with the dying echoes, I threw myself down upon my couch.

* *Pan-dan*—The box in which spices, and leaf of the Pan is kept. These are sometimes extremely costly.

† *Khoda Afiz*—A Farewell.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(Night the Fourth.)

AFTER the Mahommedan's departure, the night set in with violent and heavy rain ; inso-much so, that when I arose in the morning, intending to have crossed the river close by the palace, and proceeded to the tombs of the kings of Ahmedabad, at Sircage, about seven miles distant, I found it necessary to take a tour through the city, and gain the regular ferry established by the government, where a vessel, formed of two boats, covered with a platform, was constantly in readiness, to transport travellers and baggage. Here I encountered an old friend, whose welcome greeting of, " Old boy,

how are you ; why, what brings you here ?” quite banished from my mind the irritability which, I must confess, my circuit had induced me. I shall merely mention him as an officer who was a stranger to Ahmedabad, and whose curiosity, like my own, had led him forth to pay a visit to Sircage. I was just descending the river bank, when I overtook the jolly sub, I allude to, and I must confess his first appearance was as strikingly ludicrous, as I always found his conversation amusing. He had mounted that morning a new shooting jacket of striped ticking, as badly made as human perverseness or ignorance could have executed ; under the black velvet collar of this, and wound in cable folds around his neck, was a crimson wrapper, which ill accorded with the sunken cheek, sallow complexion, and sun-burnt countenance, of this figure of fun. His head was shadowed with a broad-brimmed hat, covered with green silk, whilst a copious waistcoat of scarlet cloth, reaching down to his very saddle, adorned with two large pockets in front, and a continued line of plated buttons, each rivalling in size one of our former eighteen-

penny pieces, tended to screen his person as much from observation as could be desired. Hanging on either side of his horse, I saw two long badly-cleaned jack-boots, in which figured doubtless his skeleton legs, above the heels of which a pair of country-made spurs, little troubled with polishing, were fastened. In his right hand he grasped his hog-spear, having slung his hunting sabre, or *couteau de chasse*, across his back.

“Got a step, at length,” he exclaimed, “through the demise of the old major, who gave us all a severe reprimand in the morning, on parade—refused us leave to a hog-hunt—got the cholera morbus, and I read prayers over him in the evening. If it was not for the appearance of this, I know not how we should shake off these set fasts upon the service. Keep off a little, for my horse has a sly habit of kicking; it is all playfulness though, but yet may break a leg. Now that war is no where to be found, and the sword, which might have then by chance removed these eye-sores, as I should chisel off a splint from my horse’s leg—what but this can

remove these calomel-visaged martinets?—But, oh! I have had such hog-hunting in Kattywar; it almost compensates for the fever I had the other day; indeed, I may say, still have, for old Pills has recommended me a change of air, and I am journeying to the Presidency for the recovery of my health, and shall not, you may depend upon it, particularly hurry back to headquarters, to march round in the dew, and salute the commanding officer.”

Thus did he run on during our whole tour to Sircage and back again, eventually picketting his horse at the Shah Bhag, and partaking of a bad currie and tough fowl, as a dinner. After which we drank cooled claret, *ad infinitum*, until my servant broke in upon our merriment in announcing the arrival of him I ought to have expected, but had forgotten.

“Saheb,” said the Mussulman, as he seated himself on an embroidered cushion, after having made both of us his salaam—“I believe when last night I sought and obtained your permission to depart, I was in the midst of a description of one of the many plots devised by Moollah Hachim to deprive me of life.”

“What!” said my friend aside, “do you know this fellow, or his history?”

“It appears to me, when I reflect on the dangers I have passed through, that the hand of Allah has ever been merciful to me.”

“But pray excuse my interrupting you,” said the sub.—“here, Tom, I wish to speak to you. I say, now we are out of his hearing, do you know what he is going to say?”

“Not I,” was my reply,—“I am no diviner of others’ thoughts.”

“Well, then, don’t be alarmed if you see me suddenly decamp, for I hate long stories, and should prefer a litle sitarrh music, or a nautch. But what a dolt you must be to believe all he tells you; why he is only laughing at your credulous beard.”

“Doubtless,” I replied; “but we must not be uncivil; come along in again, man.”

“So I will,” said the jolly sub.: “but I am off at a moment’s notice, if I wish it, like one who takes a lodging, and can’t pay for it.”—In we went, and resumed our seats.

“It is necessary, again, to imagine me in the very midst of an angry brawl, continued the nar-

rator, "surrounded by astonished domestics, and placed near to her, of corrupting whom, and alienating whose affections from her husband, I was on the point of trying to disprove in an appeal to the sword."

"I say," said my friend, the sub, "he's a rum one, this, we have to deal with."

My weapon, was at this moment, drawn in defence, of a traduced character; and although once uplifted against a relative, had yet continued free from the stain of the blood of consanguinity.

The new foe, who presented himself, to vindicate the cause of truth on the Moollah's side, was the executioner before alluded to. An athletic man, much my senior in years, and superior in bodily strength. In him, I recognised one of the city Pehlwan, whom I had seen exhibiting great prowess, on many occasions, and at which I had been much surprised.

This considerably damped my spirits; and besides, this was also the first contest I had engaged in, which might be expected to terminate fatally. We both remained for some time wary and cautious.

The Mahratta, at length approached, and began vapouring before me; jumping now here, and now there, brandishing a well-sharpened sword, with ease, activity, and grace. In the left hand, he had a long pointed knife. His limbs, inured to constant exercise, displayed the beauty of muscular proportions; as each sinew and muscle worked upon by his movements, rose into view, and made me fearful of the result. The rapid and lengthened strides he measured out to either side; now leaning forward, as if bent upon attacking me, and now retreating to some distance, staring wildly at me, to lure me off my guard, or frighten me, seemed to be the admiration of those around us.

With the exception of having a Persian dagger in my left hand, I was similarly armed with my opponent. A pause again ensued; either was fearful to strike, whilst a death-like silence reigned amongst the spectators; and few, indeed, were those, who did not esteem my life irrevocably lost. A few cuts were now exchanged without injury. The Mahratta appeared eager for an onset; but my object was, as much as possible, to act on the defensive, being decidedly

the weaker party. My foe, warmed into anger at my wariness, made a severe blow at my face, which I parried; and as he wound round to the left, shielding his head—at which I made a feint: I rushed in upon him, thus unguarded—plunged my dagger to the very hilt in his back, instantly resuming my position of defence.

Wounded, and furious, he still continued to act offensively in the combat, although under the inauspicious circumstance of increasing weakness from loss of blood. At length—finding an opportunity which I eagerly availed myself of, when he had over-reached himself, I, in my turn, became assailant; and almost severed, with a single blow, his head from his body.

His huge bulk shivered, and was convulsed, for a moment. The head dropped upon the breast of the Pehlwan, whilst an enthusiastic Shabash made the very heavens ring again, on the termination of the contest, in my favour. For, in proportion, as the chances have been against the victor, the victory is more complete.

I now advanced towards Murdan Khan, with the bleeding head, which I had removed from

the body, fixed upon the point of my sword, and claimed that latitude in favour of the truth of my statement, which he had promised to bestow on that of the victor, whoever he might be.

“It was well done, by jingo,” exclaimed the sub,—who was an Irishman. “That is just the proper course to adopt. Always keep cool, and reserve your blows for a fitting opportunity. What is the use of jaggng one’s weapon, in cutting down upon a guard; when the injured edge is less fit afterwards, for doing execution. But, I say; excuse me, you know: what did the old boy say? He did not, surely, refuse it. Oh, that I had been there! By heavens, he should have rendered justice. Did he refuse you, I say?”

“No, he did not;” replied the Mahommedan. “But I will take up my narrative where I left off in it, and you shall have his own words.

“That you shall have,” said Murdan Khan: “I grant it with pleasure. I am convinced you are innocent. Oh, that I was young, and could add another to the number of the slain on this occasion; in the death of those, who, by false accusation, seek to do you dishonour.

“ Moollah Hachim, stand forth, at once ; and hear what I have to say. You must, to-morrow, produce me the man, who, in his evil doings, has made my nephew risk his life, and myself taunt her with reproach, from whom I ever received kindness : or, by Allah, I will shave off your beard with this weapon, which has often done much execution. Moreover, if, by to-morrow’s sun-set, he is not here, be you absent also, or you must take the consequences.

“ If such is your will, I must incline my disposition to obedience,” replied the moollah. “ But did I not assure you, over and over again, that it was a rumour only, and am I to be made responsible for the slandering tongues of others, the words of whose audacity I merely mentioned to you. Is this in accordance with your universally acknowledged just and generous disposition?”

“ Yes, you must, undoubtedly, answer for repeating that even to me, breathing disgrace against my kin, proved to be false ; and as to what you or the world say, I care not. If you could not reconcile to your own mind, satisfactorily, the truth of the assertions made, why in-

cense me by recapitulating that, which, in its effects, paralyzed my understanding, and made me lift, against the son of my brother, the thirsting steel. A blade seldom drawn from its scabbard without its use be required, and its edge wetted with gore. Do not reply, for I am as unchangeable in my words, once spoken, as in my religious feelings.

“But be assured, Rustum Khan, of the sincerity of my asseverations, in stating all is forgiven and forgotten, except the conduct of him, which I have every reason to deprecate.

“Noorumbie, my beloved, retire once more into my harem, and quiet your mind, in a knowledge that you are as dear to him, who is your husband, as you ever were.”

Noorumbie now made her obeisance, and withdrew, having cast upon me, from her shining black eye, a lustrous glance of affectionate gratitude, which well corresponded with the one I stole at her, indicative of the same feeling, which I entertained towards her for the advice contained in her note, which I believed the one I received to have been.

I afterwards discovered that the affair had its

origin thus : Noorumbie was unable to write to me herself, and consequently, was forced to intrust her secret to the gardener's wife, (this, Saheb, is an every-day occurrence) who supplied the ladies of Murdan Khan's Zenanah with chaplets of mogrey flowers for their hair, as well as scented oil. This woman applied to a moon-shee who resided in Ahmedabad, failing, at the same time, to bribe him over to secrecy; and he being a friend of Moollah Hachim's, had soon entrapped her unsuspecting mind into a full disclosure of all the circumstances. From her he derived every information,—the name of the person the note was intended for,—that of the writer,—and, moreover, the names of those whose treachery the note was intended to frustrate. This he again recapitulated to the moollah, who merely mentioned the occurrence of a note having passed between his wife and myself to Murdan Khan, withholding the rest; the effects of which information, he knew would be displayed in ungovernable violence against myself, and might save him the trouble and the danger of encompassing my ruin. But my positive denial of this

note having ever been given to me, which they considered my language implied, completely satisfied the moollahs, once more, that all was right, as regarded their former intentions.

Murdan Khan now threw his arms around my neck, embraced me, and shed tears of repentance, at having, for an instant, entertained an opinion of my having treated him with baseness and ingratitude.

“ It cannot be helped now,” said the old man, “ it is impossible, at my advanced age, to alter my disposition. The active life I have been accustomed to, since my youth, until the present inactivity and want of employment, has imprinted on my mind an impetuosity amounting to rashness. All that I ever achieved, I owe to these impressions having made me bold in my decision, and immediate in carrying it into execution. Yet this unfits me, when worked upon by suspicious insinuation, from acting, upon all occasions, as I should wish to do. My anger once excited, and no time is lost; the blow imagined is struck, and often-times it proves to be so, in an unjust cause.

“Thanks be to Allah, who nerved you with courage to repel my attack, and praised be his Almighty Providence, which, in the cause of justice, made the stripling overcome the bearded pehlwan.—Yes, to-morrow will I distribute alms to the poor, and make intercession with God.—Away with this dead body! and bestow on his friends, in giving it back to them, an example that the God of the Mahommedans has not yet quite deserted them, or the cause of justice. Away with it, ye astonished gholams!* away with it, I say.—And now, Rustum Khan, I think a little refreshment can do you no injury. Enter once more, fearlessly and with hearty welcome, the house from which the voice of slander would have expelled you.”

The moollahs seemed each, now, to vie with the other, in giving praise to God for having befriended my cause, and, with considerable hesitation, were induced, at length, to quiet my uncle's apprehensions, in adding a prayer in favour of my safety, on the morrow. Yet so well did

* *Gholam*.—Slave.

they counterfeit, that I alone could discern the reason of their backwardness. I could discover that, in its utterance, the warning voice of conscience whispered to their imagination, that they, in so praying, asked a power far more potent than their own, which had invented machinations against my life, to frustrate them.

The example they had just witnessed, doubtless, added to the uneasy feeling with which they again joined with old Murdan, at his request, in soliciting my safe journey to my father's dwelling. Yet necessity demanded it from them, in furtherance of the object of their schemes, and guilt was forced to submit. Stealing away, when Murdan Khan had left me at leisure, so to do, in joining his women in their apartments, doubtless, to ease his aching heart, in an atonement for his conduct to his beloved wife, I hastened to the large mosque, near at hand, and found the Ayah Shah, as restless and impatient as possibly can be imagined, having been delayed there considerably beyond the time appointed.

"What means all this disturbance at Murdan Khan's dwelling," she ejaculated, as I entered

the mosque,—“and pray, if not a party interested, and therefore you cannot answer, what necessity urged your engaging in the quarrel, which, I understand is regarding the honour of one of his household. I suppose, although you represent yourself as one of those, who respect the sanctity of the harem, you yet have an occasional fit of love, to bestow on such beauties as chance may throw in your way, to break in upon your determination. I am sure I have guessed rightly, for you look so abashed—a sure proof of guilt. Now, pray, what shall I report to your doating mistress? Shall I say I found you engaged in espousing the cause of another lady, and that too, a married one?”

“I pray you,” said I, interrupting her, “not to taunt me in this careless manner; you cannot judge of my feelings at this moment. The scene you have witnessed, originated in a false accusation against the lady Noorumbie and myself, which I have been forced to appeal to combat in denial of. If you would, dear Ayah Shah, relieve my oppressed mind, detail to me at once, what the only object of my affections has in-

structed you to communicate, and do not thus upbraid me."

"Well then," replied she, "as you are a generous young man, as well as brave, which I hope you will ever remain, you deserve, right well, the news I am enjoined to convey to you; and I think it would ease any aching heart, were its sorrows as numerous as the sins of the idolater."

"No delay, let me hear it at once," I resumed, "most true and faithful servant of her I love, and you shall be well recompensed for your trouble; aye, to your heart's content, if gold or silver can ensure it."

"Well then, I am instructed to acquaint you, that my mistress continues in the same state of mind to which love I told you had reduced her; and I am farther to tell you—but wait, let me reflect lest I should forget any portion,—that she lives alone for your happiness! Yes; that's right. That she will not willingly become the wife of another, whilst you are willing to become her husband. Yes; that is correct. Much less be immured in the harem of Murdan Khan, whose jealousy, they say, outstrips his cunning. This I can posi-

tively assert. Indeed, the world has different opinions regarding the manner this portion of the old dotard's household is managed; and, let me not surprise you, but my mistress has heard several very discreditable accounts of the events which take place there. Yet you must be silent on this score. Wah, wah, young man, I congratulate you; so potent in valour, and so irresistible in love affairs,—to what has a sight of you reduced my once unthinking mistress! No sooner did I repeat your name to her, than she commenced repeating,—‘Rustum Khan, Rustum Khan,’—and continued without intermission to mention it, lest, as she said, she might forget the name of him who had enslaved her. Then followed sigh upon sigh, and such severe ones too, it would suffice to make one believe that love was nothing more than another name for sorrow;—then came a violent flood of tears to ease her overburthened heart. Perhaps you do not believe half I say; but I assure you it is all true;—love has already made sad havoc in her young and confiding heart. Over and over again has she remarked to me, ‘how handsome the young lad is,—what a fine countenance, athletic frame, and

elegant stature ; oh, that he were mine !—What mildness is depicted in his face, and what eyes of fire. That single glance he gave me, from the ruin, spoke volumes. Do you not think he will make a good husband, my dear Ayah Shah ? Answer me, and you shall receive a new dress.’

“ In all this I as readily acquiesce, as she is prompt in putting the questions to me ; and yet, in another half hour, she commences at me again on the same subject. But I will not proceed farther, as all this is too flattering ; and I fear you may think the conquest not worth pursuing any more, as the victory is so easily obtained :—besides, I have the orders of my mistress to withhold all this from you ; but I cannot refuse you anything. You must not, however, give up the affair on any account, recollect, or I shall fall into disgrace ; which is often the consequence of over reliance upon another, and too free explanation. In my opinion, young men frequently go great lengths to win the heart of a young girl ; but let them once know they possess it, and it is thrown by with disdain,—such, I hope, will not be the case with you.”

“ Be not alarmed on this subject, worthy

Ayah Shah ;” I eagerly exclaimed, putting at the same time a few rupees into her hand ; “ but as you are so clever in describing her state of mind, augment it yet five times more, and even then you cannot say too much ; for my part, I am past hope,—the slave of her who thus honours me with her love.”

“ Well,” continued the Ayah Shah, “ she laments most bitterly that she cannot see you, ere you go ; but enjoins me to give you, in return for your present, this Peishcubg, the hilt of which is inlaid with diamonds, with which she hopes you will seek revenge in the death of him who has thus peremptorily called you away, and deprived her of the pleasure of an interview.”

“ Is it thus,” I ejaculated, “ she is pleased to treat me, in her language ? Yah Khoda, what good fortune attends me ! I am almost bewildered. Convey to her adorable hearing the vow of constancy I now make, and which, I swear by the beard of the Prophet, ever to preserve towards her ; and re-assure her, if my life is spared, I will hasten to her the moment I have quieted my father’s anxiety on my account. Hasten to her !

No ; tell her I will fly with the speed of the eagle's wing. It may, however, be prudent to inform her, at the same time, that a short delay may ensue, ere he who blesses even the dust disturbed by her footsteps, claims her condescension in an interview ; and if so, to rest assured, it is the want of opportunity, not of affection, retards his hastening to prostrate himself before her beauty."

"Receive, then," said the old woman, in return, "her protestations of unfeigned affection for you ; for such I have been schooled to convey to your ear. And, on my own part, receive my benediction ; and may the all-merciful Allah prosper all your undertakings !" With these words she left me.

Nor was I able to collect my thoughts sufficiently to add another word, not even a farewell, ere she had departed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(Fourth Night continued.)

“ However the sword of man may strike,
It injures not a single vein without the will of God.”

Persian.

THE narrator here paused, and my friend, the sub. roared out—“ Capital, by heavens ! capital ! Shah-Bash, or whatever you call it—I am no great linguist, or I would add—A Yah Khodah, or Ulhumdu—what is it ?—lillah ?—aye, Ulhumdalillah.” Then, turning aside to me, he whispered, “ The old boy has seen something in his day ; the Indian world was not then as dull as it now appears to be ; but I wish he would go on, instead of pulling away at that hubble-bubble.”

“ Now for a little fire to light my cigar by,

for talking and smoking are not the same thing,—and my pipe has gone out. Here, you Mahomed,—is not that his name? has your master got his brandy-bottle under lock and key, or have you emptied it, for I can get none; and tell my ghorawallah to take the saddle off my horse, and that I shall not want him for an hour or two.”

“Perhaps, dost, or friend,” he said, addressing the Mahomedan, “you are at leisure to proceed in your detail. If so, you know your own time and language will suit; we do not wish to interfere with you,” although I am forced to get a translation of the latter from our host.

“Oh! I am always ready,” rejoined the person spoken to; “your slave is now refreshed again. To proceed:—The thoughts which then came rushing to my mind breathed nothing but delight. What joy have I ever experienced in my life-time which can in anywise be compared with that, the delicious information communicated to me by the Ayah Shah produced. I was then to consider myself beloved by her I sought to obtain. And moreover, such flattering opinions of my personal appearance, were entertained by her who enjoyed un-

disputed sway over my love. Yes, it was so, and I could have tarried in the mosque, where I yet fancied I heard the echo of her words, and indulged in the pleasure imparted to my longing imagination, had it not been necessary for me, from less fortuitous circumstances, to return with all expedition to the house of my relative. No sooner had I entered the inclosure, than Murdan Khan, in all haste and eagerness, flew towards me, and once more lavished on me the fond embrace of reconciliation.

“I was afraid,” said he, “my son, that you had departed, having taken umbrage at my folly. Fool that I was, to suspect you for a moment, and much more so, for having stigmatized my wife with the opprobrious epithets I used towards her. But it shall not occur again, you may assure yourself; as the experience, gained by a consciousness of having acted wrong, seldom fails to leave a salutary impression behind it, upon my mind. Go now to my servant, who will give you some coffee, as excellent in flavour as it is refreshing; and then rest, for you must in truth be weary after your day’s fatigue. How much have I not

to upbraid myself with? To-morrow morning I will arise before you start in company with the moollahs, and bid you farewell! Till then, may Allah preserve you." Again he embraced me, and departed.

The restless manner in which I spent the night made me hail the approach of morn, in the coming of the false dawn, with little less than a feeling of gratitude.

How could it be otherwise—who, may I ask, would not fly from the bed of impatience to mingle in scenes which, although likely to prove fatal to his interests, may yet, in excitement, lend a balm to irritation.

Not long after the muezzin's warning voice had finished his accustomed exhortation to all true believers, to hasten to the mosque to pray and hold communion with their Maker, the two moollahs and Murdan Khan made their appearance, bending their way from the house towards the spot where I was adjusting my horse's furniture.

The trying time, when the Khoda Afiz often claims a tear from parting relatives, came on

apace, and I could not help indulging a little delay, as it was one of poignant grief to me. The recollections of my situation burthened my heart with despondency, when they turned upon my affection for the lovely object who had won my heart.

Again, when the old man, as he pronounced the Khoda Afiz, bedewed the furrowed cheeks of his aged countenance with the silent, and commanding testimony of the tear of his affection towards me, my conscience upbraided me for leaving him a prey to the wily machinations of those wretches, who waited to accompany me, and who would perhaps, by the force of destiny, ere long, return to resume their unlawful and unlicensed control over his household. This idea added fresh vigour to my determination to free him, if possible, from their baneful influence, and nerved me for exertion.

Having mounted my horse, I moved forward, amidst a burst of blessings from Murdan Khan.

“ You must hasten, my son, to see me again, and partake of a welcome,” he ejaculated, as my horse’s tramp passed over the threshold of the

inclosure. Here his voice faltered, and he faintly added—"Be watchful on your journey, and avoid all suspicious-looking characters, for the province around Ahmedabad is, you know, as celebrated for assassins as for minstrels and fair maidens. Therefore, my son, I say, be wary, and keep your eyes on the alert. Do not forget," he roared out—"to unloose your sword handle from the fastening, which would otherwise prevent your drawing it immediately; but above all preserve, under every circumstance, the dauntless bearing of your ancestors. Adieu!"

The faint sound of another and another farewell, and the echo produced by the adjoining houses, at length died away, and distance soon separated us from the possibility of hearing any more. Wrapt in thought, and scarcely able to refrain from weeping at one moment, or turning upon my companion at another, I pursued, rather by chance, than from any consciousness on my part, the right road. I was amazed and astonished to find myself at one of the principal gates of the city, before I had imagined myself clear of the square near which I had so long

dwelt. The same busy and thronged bazaars, which had before awakened my curiosity, (a feeling so easily excited in the male sex) and gratified my insatiable appetite for novelty, now failed to excite the slightest interest. I had passed under the Teen Durwazeh, from near which, I had gazed on the busy scene of the Taboot procession, only a few days before, with intense excitement, and yet it had not now left a trace in my recollection that I had ever been near to it.

The large mosque in which the old Ayah Shah had made me a confession, in her character of elchee or ambassador, from her mistress, which I shall never forget, and where Murdan Khan used to pray for the fulfilment of his desires, was alike numbered with those places which, although possessing every interest before, were now passed by unheeded.

My gaze rested on Moollah Ibrahim, as I turned to ascertain, if I was right or not; and my attention became rivetted upon his person. Plainly dressed, in snowy white muslin garments, and mounted on a docile horse—once the property of

my uncle ; but given to this villain, in common with every thing he had chosen to desire, or even to admire,—he continued to move forward, apparently, as little conscious of the way he took, as I had been during my march through the city. It was evident his mind was wholly abstracted from what his eye encountered. He was about thirty years of age, and, although not particularly prepossessing at first sight, was, nevertheless, well formed, and of a pleasing contour. He rather improved in estimation, as regarded his outward form, as acquaintance with him, familiarized it.

There was a pensive cast, at the moment when I was engaged in scanning his countenance, fixed upon his brow ; doubtless, the concomitant of a guilty mind. Yet, I alone, of many, should have judged it so ; because I was impressed with a conviction of his being a sinner, which others would never have surmised. To an ordinary observer, it would, I am assured, have conveyed an idea of peculiar sanctity of character, belonging to him, who had assumed such an expressive feature, for it corresponded well with the gravity depicted on the face of one, who, in his enthu-

siasm to serve the all-merciful Allah, abstracts himself from worldly enjoyment—its pomp—its vanity, and nothingness.

“Where is Moollah Hachim?” I exclaimed, “I fear he must have lost his way, in following us through the city. He is, perhaps, unaccustomed to journey to a distance.”

Startled at my voice, he could not, for a moment, recover himself from the embarrassment my question engendered; vibrating as it did, upon the cord of his deceitful conduct.

“Where! how! when! I hope not,” he ejaculated, with evident emotion, as if unconscious of what he had uttered, or had said.

“How can it be? I am sure I was explicit enough for any one, who is as desirous as he is, to understand on this occasion, or rather, on every occasion, as I should say; for, the acquisition of information of all kinds, is, with him, a pleasing task.” His thoughts now returned to him, in the full force of all their cunning; and he added, as if suddenly recollecting himself, “true, true, now my memory is clear, I am certain he said so. Yes,

he is to follow me. I begin to fear my senses are failing me. The last words he uttered in my hearing, as I mounted, were, to intimate to you, his unfeigned regret, that he had been called on to witness the dying moments of a friend, and that he could not accompany us in our morning's ride.

"Are we not then to have his company at all, Moollah Ibrahim?"

"Yes, to be sure, we are. How can he absent himself, when he has a guest upon the road to meet him? He will reach Butwah about an hour after ourselves, I make no doubt. He would not, I am sure, on any account, put off his intention of offering up a prayer for your safety. You may rely on his attendance, as surely as I can upon his words."

"He is great in condescension, my friend," I replied. "How truly auspicious must the protection called down from heaven, at the instance of his religious fervour, be. But how much more would his presence have enhanced the pleasure of my ride. The debt of gratitude I owe to him, augments every hour of

his absence, into an age. I cannot help regretting his being forced to proceed such a distance, and through such a dangerous country as we are traversing, alone and unprotected. It is not right, and I am doubly alarmed for his safety, when I consider that the journey is undertaken solely for my welfare. Oh, moollah! he must, indeed, be an excellent man, who now is present at the death-bed scene, to mitigate the time of suffering, and only quits it, to pray for the safety of the traveller."

"And so he is," continued my companion. "You must longer enjoy his acquaintance, fully to appreciate his merits. It is impossible for me to repeat to you all I could of his worth and kindness. His charity, his meekness, his religious fervour, rank high in my estimation. But if any one can boast of enjoying a greater portion of his kind wishes than his neighbour, it is yourself, Rustum Khan; and if his endeavours were crowned with success, I am sure he would ensure you the blessings of paradise, after your sojourn in this world has terminated.

Ameen,* I say. For my own part, in calling him brother, I bestow my affections as unfeignedly upon him as though he bore that relation to me, by the ties of consanguinity, and which could never fail to make me zealous in promoting his welfare. If Hafiz was gifted with seven lives, and once more remanded to this world, he could never, in devoting them solely to write the praises of Moollah Hachim, compass his end. But no, I will say no more. Here we are, within a few *goley ka tuppa*† of our journey's end, and I am rejoiced to add, safe in person, and possessed of our clothing, which few travellers can boast of in these days."

We now arrived at the tomb, where those, whose professed occupation in life was a steady and undeviating adherence to the principles of our blessed religion, intended the perpetration of a murder, as a profanation. Here, where the

* *Ameen*.—Amen.

† *Goley ka tuppa*.—Range of a bullet. The natives of India often compute distance in this manner, by allusion.

mouldering bones of the deceased reposed in quiet, was the place appointed for the bitter struggle of animosity. I shuddered as I thought upon it. A range of mausoleums, over-shadowed by lofty trees, with extensive inclosures around them, immediately arrests the attention of a traveller, as he approaches Butwah. It is an imposing scene to dwell upon, for some of these are in a highly finished state, whilst others, surpassing, in grandeur of design, the means and finances of those who intended erecting them, remain a prey to decay ere completed. The crude materials lie scattered about in all directions—here heaps of bricks, and there blocks of stone, intended to have been highly sculptured, but only just began, when the hand of fate checked farther progress.

At the entrance to the tomb of Shah Alum, we alighted, and not long after Moollah Hachim came galloping up,—his horse covered with foam, reeking with sweat, and his mouth jagged with the severe bit,—and joined us. His greeting was kind and familiar, his words pleasing to the ear, but his face, distorted with

anxiety and darkened with hatred, sent terrors to my soul. As I dismounted, a travelling mendicant, as I judged him to be at first, came up, and demanded charity of me. The voice which pronounced the “Ram, ram,” or Hindoo salutation, I could not have supposed I had ever heard before.

“What then,” said I, “do you mistake me for. Where can you find a mussulman,” I added, spurning him from me, “who would bestow a piece on a dog of an idolater like you. Be off this instant, or one of my attendants shall give you all my generosity has in store for you. A few stripes of the rattan, better befit you, than any thing else I know of. I say start, or qui hi, who is there?”

“What,” said the mendicant, “who is there? a sincere slave of your will; but listen to me; follow for a yard or two, as if in anger, and I will explain all. Do not be rashly inconsiderate; my appearance and my reality widely differ—aye! hear me—as widely as the smile upon the countenance of Moollah Hachim, and the intention of his heart.”

I started back in confusion ; he led the way and I followed.

“ I am no idolater,” rejoined my old friend, the fakeer, as we entered the seclusion a patch of cocoa-trees offered us ; “ perhaps you know me now I have resumed my usual voice. Myself and old Abdoollah are all ready prepared to act on a moment’s warning ; so be not afraid. Be assured we keep a steady watch upon their actions.”

Besmearcd with the ashes of burnt cow-dung—naked, with the exception of a piece of cloth girt about his loins, with hempen cords twisted round and round—his hair soiled for the occasion with mud from the adjoining tank—and playing on an instrument as he parted from me—he was the image of a drunken, debauching Gosayen ; now reeling, now dancing, now singing the praises of idols, extending his arms, and shouldering his crutch, he moved off, a perfect character.

On entering the tomb, Moollah Hachim became very assiduous in his attentions to me. First he offered me coffee ; then his pipe ; after-

wards some pan : all of which I, however, succeeded in refusing. Without raising their apprehensions for an instant, I found a ready excuse for all ; and doubtless I owe this to the workings of fate.

“ And now we may as well,” said he, after a short interval, during which the two had been busied in conversation, carry into effect the object we had in view in coming here : a prayer for the safety” this last word died off in a whisper, “ of Rustum Khan. What say you, Moollah Ibrahim ? have you recovered the fatigue of your journey, and are you now willing to join in a prayer ?”

“ With all my heart !” was the reply, expressed in a faint and tremulous voice.

“ And what is your wish, Rustum Khan ?”

“ That the prayer may ensure my safety,” I rejoined, giving some little and particular accent to my words. “ But how,” I continued, “ can it be otherwise ? Your sacred characters, and pious obedience to the mandates of our faith, must ever induce the All-merciful to grant you the prayer of your desires. No ! I feel a steady reliance in

his power, to paralyze the uplifted arm, which seeks to injure me unjustly. What say you, my friend?"

"That we may as well perform our ablutions at once, and retire from this tomb, to one more sequestered. When once engaged in such an undertaking as my present one, I give up all my heart and soul for its accomplishment—yes, that I do! The mind, if the eye is gazing on such a busy scene as this high road presents, becomes abstracted in its ideas, and weans them from what they ought solely to rest upon. Prayer is, I can assure you, if mingled with worldly thoughts, not of much avail, or, at least, such as I very much disapprove of. Besides, privacy is enjoined when it can be obtained: it is befitting meekness, and clearly demonstrates that ostentation is not the object in view. Again, the sight of an idolater gazing at me when at prayer, always kindles my indignation. To think that he spurns the example we true believers offer for his salvation, and places every faith in idols, always irritates me beyond compare. And might not our being unawares, and engaged in prayer, furnish an

opportunity for sacrificing us, if any evil-designed people should be in the neighbourhood? No, no! let us at once repair to a spot, where we cannot be overlooked, or interfered with."

All this hypocritical argument was allowed to be to the purpose; or, at all events, I never thought of refuting it.

Followed by the Moollah's servants, bearing carpets, we sought, under the guidance of Moolah Hachim, a convenient retreat.

The first we gained, had this fault, the next another, and so on; because it was not the one appointed. Directing my attention to a scene passing in the bed of the adjoining tank, Moolah Ibrahim bent forward, and spoke softly to his friend. Every moment, after a few whispers, which had passed between the confederates, added fuel to my impatience, as I felt convinced, they related to the approaching crisis. Neither was fear an utter stranger to my bosom; I must confess, my long harassed nerves, worked upon by thought and uncertainty, were not proof against such trials, as impatience and delay. A slight trepidation shook my frame—my knees

tottered for a moment, whilst the doubtful issue cast a proportionate gloom over my drooping feelings. However, it was now no time to waver. Having hurried matters forward, at my own will and pleasure, I could not harbour the idea of meeting them with irresolution. No! I shook off all panics, and resumed my determination to abide the consequences with fortitude. Mustering to my aid all my courage, and muttering a short prayer—in which I reposed my confidence, I continued to follow them with dauntless step. I was completely myself again, when we entered a mausoleum, defaced considerably within, and in, and about which, a number of bats were flying to and fro, scared at our sudden appearance. The sarcophagus, built of immense blocks of the purest marble, had formed, originally, a handsome pile, but was nearly levelled with the up-torn floor, and strewed in fragments around, when I saw it; the stucco had, in many places, giving to the effects of damp and time, fallen from the walls; whilst the bricks of the dome, were fast crumbling into decay. Four large and spacious arches, opened from the interior, to the four sides of the building,

so that I was fully exposed to attack, in every direction.

This, I perceived, was an advantage the Moolahs did not fail to appreciate ; as the significant nods, and mutual glances of approbation, which they exchanged, fully convinced me, that they conceived their plan certain of success. The knowledge, that my followers were, doubtless, within hearing, nevertheless, cheered up my drooping spirits.

The servants having spread the carpets, and a short, but animated conversation, being finished, which was only intended to give them time to regain the tomb of Shah Alum, we entered, (that is, myself and Moollah Ibrahim) the uninviting shelter of this ruin ; and each, was soon, apparently, absorbed in prayer. The absence of the servants, was a point upon which they seemed most anxious to assure themselves, and Moollah Hachim, having previously ascended a hillock, watched, until he saw them safe to a distance, and then joined us.

I had luckily taken the precaution, at the instance of my uncle's request, to unloose the string,

which is fastened to the hilt of our swords, as well as affixed to the scabbard, to prevent the latter from falling off.

Had I not done so, Yah Khodah, what would not have been the consequences? But, thus prepared, I continued standing in the centre of my carpet, muttering a prayer for my safety, the best my scattered senses could frame, in this time of excitement, ready to grasp my weapon in an instant,—as necessity might demand. The delay was irksome in the extreme. Moollah Hachim, in rising from a prostration, coughed aloud, once, twice, thrice. My hand, instinctively clenched itself around the handle of my trusty blade, and shook convulsively : when, instantly, two assassins rushed into the tomb, armed with drawn swords and daggers. Il ullah, how can I describe what I felt. The moollahs fled. I turned towards the quarter of attack, to front my foes.

In stooping, whilst in the act of unsheathing my sword, one of my assailants aimed a blow at my head—which must have severed it from my body, had it not, by good fortune, lighted on the edge of my weapon, carried over my head, by the

force I used in disengaging it from the scabbard. It was, at all times, difficult to draw ; but danger added additional vigour to my efforts.

I now retreated to an angle, formed by a corner of the building, and covering myself with a guard, commenced the unequal contest, as vigorously as they directed the assault. Although much confined, I contrived, by vigilance, to elude and ward off the shower of their blows. Parrying, I alone, had recourse to, as my foes were, both, apparently, good swordsmen ; and I deemed it prudent to work upon their irritability, by opposition alone. I now managed to draw my dirk, with my left hand, and succeeded in wounding one of my assailants in his right arm, (who had, unable to controul his impetuosity, rushed too far forward) but not sufficiently, to render it useless. In return, I received a slight cut, through my turban, on my head, which, had it not been difficult for my opponent to penetrate the numerous folds, must have given the victory to those, who, would have exulted in it ;—its resistance saved my life.

This slight interchange of wounds, tended only to raise their blood-thirsty ferocity, and to render

me still more active in maintaining my defence ; on all these occasions, a determined coolness gives every advantage. Vowing vengeance aloud, and repeating Allah Akbar, I was on the point of endeavouring to open a way past my assailants, in acting on the offensive, being tired of the posture I had hitherto assumed, when Allah Akbar, repeated from without, in the manly nervous voice of the fakeer, gave surety of my companions being aware of my danger. I now dashed forward, heedless of consequences, when in rushed Abdoollah, with the vigour of youth, and fire beaming in his aged eye, covered me from a blow I was unprepared for ; and in another moment one of the Bheels was numbered with the dead.

His experienced hand had selected its victim with unerring aim. The keen blade of my follower, may he be blessed, drank his foe's life's-blood in the first blow dealt at him. His head, almost severed from the body, drooped upon his breast ; the carcass tottered, fell, and he lay weltering in his gore.

Abdoollah was now the object of attack by the

other, when the fakeer dashed in. The surviving Bheel, seeing the desperate odds against him, endeavoured to gain one of the corners of the building, opposite to the one in which I had maintained my defence. My example, doubtless, in its consequences, made him anxious to imitate it. It was not, however, so ordained in his fate ; for, as he turned round, shielding his head, with his sword as a guard, I gave him a cut in his right side, which was exposed from the uplifting of his arm, and he fell at length, exhausted from loss of blood.

A more noble fellow than this Bheel, believe me, I have never seen opposed to me on any occasion. As long as his strength failed him not altogether, so long did he continue to fight, not intimidated in the least by disparity of number. No ; it was clearly apparent a scene of bloodshed was to him no novelty. And, as he lay, he continued his attempts to injure us with his nerveless cuts, if we approached him within distance. At last, I sprang upon him, with my drawn dagger in my hand. He seemed warmed into

life for an instant, and endeavoured to do me an injury. This, however, was beyond his power ; and I swore, by the beard of the Prophet, to annihilate him at once, if he would not disclose who had instigated him to seek my life. “ If you will make a candid confession,” I said, “ I will forgive you all ; moreover, listen to me ; for in the event of your so doing, by the same oath do I bind myself to provide for your family, in case you die of your wounds. What more can I say, after your conduct towards me. Will you consent ? ”

“ No,” was the reply.

Here the narrator motioned Mahomed to give him his hookah ; whilst my friend, the Irish sub., went on rattling away after the usual fashion, with, “ How the deuce could you expect him to speak when at death’s door ; it’s not so easy, let me assure you, when your breath is just waiting, the last moment before starting. Then, like a race, the word ‘ off ’ is given, and away it goes, at no rate. No, no ; he was the kind of fellow now, that I should admire—‘ game ’ to the very

last. None of your whining cowards, who, when they have failed to hit the mark, and get in return for their clumsiness, a sort of *something* incurable, set up howling a stave of penitence, and would have a host of curates in their gowns around them—pretty work indeed.”

CHAPTER X.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(Fourth Night continued.)

“ Deliver over him, who injures you, to fate ;
For fate is a servant that will avenge your quarrel.”

Persian.

“ No, no, the boy I like is such a fellow as you know who, of the Artillery, Tom, who, when he got a touch of the corporal or cholera, turned out the unfortunate parson who visited him in the hour of need, lest he should catch cold from looking upon his unpromising countenance. As the padree moved off, though, he had the politeness to offer him a little grog, but not being a nautical preacher, he flatly refused, and began to offer a few comments.—“ Oh !” says the sick man, “ wait till I reach my boot, old boy, when

I think I can display to you some of the learning I have acquired in this country, in the very handsome manner in which I will give you a touch of the heel upon your over anxious tongue." This exertion, Tom, would you believe it, induced a perspiration, and he recovered; so don't be alarmed, you know, if, when I have the cholera, I try the parson's dose—hah, hah, hah,—well, but now to the tale again, friend."

The Mahommedan urged the necessity of starting—spoke about prayers—a thing the sub. had never heard of, so it failed to make the desired impression, and he was forced to proceed as follows:

The two confederates, as before described, had, on the impetuous rush-on of their hirelings, to assault me in the tomb, immediately withdrawn; cowardice and guilt can never be separated. Deeply interested in the fatal game that was going forward, their anxiety kept them rooted near and about the spot. At a short distance, screened partially from observation by an intervening hillock, they had awaited the issue of the combat. What must have been their situa-

tion, when the first moments of the attack were fruitless of success, and each succeeding one fraught with the chance of failure.

The arrival, as I have already mentioned, of my friends, checked at once the fond hope they entertained of my being murdered, and reduced the fabric of their machinations to the ruin of despair. Upon the basis of human invention they had founded the temple of disobedience to their God, and could they expect to avert his dreadful wrath, if his Almighty arm was stretched forth to save the injured?

Can the funeral pile, raised in the desert, and composed of sand by a loving friend, over the bones of his much-valued companion, there buried, withstand the gusts of the hurricane?—No, never; and so was it with the moollahs, when Allah came to oppose them.

Seeing that one of their mercenary murderers had already fallen a victim under our victorious blades, and that the other was overpowered, covered with wounds, and doubtless in a dying state, they conceived it high time to try the chance of obliterating from my mind any suspi-

cion which their base desertion of me in the hour of peril might have given rise to. But to what expedients will not the guilty resort, to gain their desires? Approaching nearer by degrees, they at last determined to raise an alarm, when the hour was past, in which such could have been of any avail. They now began to roar aloud, invoking Allah's assistance, and asking the blessed Prophet to shield them from danger, called loudly for their servants, mingling abusive epithets with vociferations for their immediate attendance, whilst "Murder! murder!" resounded around. As this threatened to interfere with my intention of making the Bheel confess, if possible, ere he died, and fearing their presence might operate in restraining the inclination of the wounded man, if otherwise favourable to my wishes, I ordered my two attendants to remove them to a suitable distance. "Moreover," said I, you have my positive injunctions, on no account, to permit them to depart." Although loath at first to comply with the instructions I had given, and which Abdoollah, without hesitation, proceeded to enforce, a single threat, and my uplifted sword,

ready to second it, if necessary, sufficed to bring them to obedience, and they departed, murmuring at the ignominious manner in which, they said, I requited their kindness.

“What shall I do?” said the old fellow, as he was moving off, “if these rascals attempt to escape, for doubtless their speed surpasses mine, and they would therefore outstrip me in a race.”

“Kill whomsoever you can overtake,” was the reply, and “give them little opportunity for a start, if lopping a limb from them, can avail any thing.—No play—I will be answerable to God and my conscience.”

After this interruption I again proceeded to my task. What endeavours did I not make, although to no purpose. The wounded man, now much exhausted, appeared, however, to revive a little, after the cut which had prostrated him, had been bandaged up with my cummerband.* The moments, as they rapidly succeeded each other, became more precious. At first I entertained a

* *Cummerband*.—Waistcloth.

little hope, but latterly I felt certain, that his life was lost to him. I tried denunciations of vengeance and promises of reward, alternately, but nothing could soften the obduracy of the dying man ; nor can I but admire his fidelity. However deplorable the situation, however unjust the conduct of him who espouses the cause of another, let him, at all hazards, remain true—such is his duty.

The glazed eye-ball—the far-receding eye-lid—the drooping eye-lash,—and withering features of the bheel, urged me on in my endeavours. Exhaustion was fast closing the door against all hope, when, of a sudden, in a faint, faltering voice, he demanded a little water, to quench his burning thirst—“ I ask but this, and then I die ! ” This was the first break to that determined silence he had hitherto persisted in. Oh, how much it relieved me, I cannot express to you ; I longed to grant his request ; but could not think of doing so, unless he promised to reveal all, I desired to be made acquainted with. My youthful heart yearned within me—I saw his sufferings, and commiserated them—a tear stood for

a moment in my eye. The fakeer saw this, whispered me, and I regained my fortitude ; not but that my heart bled with grief, whilst my tongue was loudest in denying it.

“ Not one drop shall you obtain from me,” I said, in reply to his request ; “ no, not one, were it certain to ensure your recovery. What then ! after attempting my life, and frustrating my wishes, up to this moment, am I to administer to your wants ? Not I, indeed ! by the revered name of my father, I swear to refuse it, until you promise to disclose what led you to attempt my destruction. We have never seen each other before, and unless prompted so to do by others, I am convinced I should not have been attacked.”

“ Only give me water !” he ejaculated, with a somewhat louder voice. “ Give me but water ; only a drop—a single drop, to soften the agony of my dying moments, and—and—No, let me reflect—my sufferings cannot continue long, and such a deed will be base and cowardly. All is over now ; and what good can I gain by a disclosure ? Leave me to my fate ; I am resolved—yes, yes, resolved !”

A considerable pause here ensued. The ago-

nizing writhings which convulsed the poor man, who, although guilty, I felt convinced must have been driven by poverty, to receive the advantageous offers, which I had every reason to believe had been proffered to him, shook the constancy of my denial, and I ordered the fakeer to give him some water. Whether wrong or right I cared not—I could dissemble no longer—the sight was more than I could endure: let him be ever so wicked, I reflected, it is still human nature in agonies before me; and my reluctant feelings to relieve him, were at last reduced to obedience by the kinder impulses of mercy. On how many occasions have I, in my way through life, gained my purpose, by keeping the path of merciful consideration, in lieu of following that of stern justice, and unbending severity:—and yah Khodah, what a lengthened draught he took, when once allowed the opportunity of so doing. Snatching at the rudely-formed cup of leaves, he hurried it to his mouth, drank off its contents, and, as constantly as one was finished, begged for more. “More!” would he exclaim, “such delights almost compensate for my sufferings!”

Having at length satisfied himself, and allayed

his thirst, he ejaculated, “ May you, although I know not who you are, have, in the moments of your dissolution, some one near, to soften the dying agonies, in administering to your latest wants. I would have murdered you ! but now, were my life granted me, I would ever protect you ! But where are those, who ought to have effected my rescue from this unhappy situation ? I say, where are they, whose blades lingered in their scabbards, in the hour of danger ? ”

He begged, at this instant, to be raised and supported. I did as he wished.

Casting a glance around the tomb, he remarked, in a wondering tone of voice—“ They are not here ; I see them not ! the base rascals, they have deserted me ! Where are you, I say, who have betrayed me ? Nowhere ?—then vengeance and revenge are mine ! More water quickly, ere I die ; more water, and I will disclose all. Yes, yes, that I will. Revenge, revenge,—and oh ! death, spare me a moment longer. You are, indeed, closing upon me—but tarry, tarry, I say, yet a little while ; and he yelled aloud—tarry, aye, tarry ! ”

Water was again administered to him, and a faint change for the better was perceptible ; although the upheaving chest, as it laboured to inhale the last few breathings allotted this unhappy man, gave every alarming symptom of immediate dissolution. With what anxiety did I watch his countenance, as it now assumed the appearance of that, of a living being, and again relapsed into inexpression. Stimulated by anxiety, I did all in my power : he moved again—struggled to give utterance to his words—and succeeded.

“ Let those,” he said, with a broken voice, “ let those, who have, in purchasing my services, sacrificed my life, now pay the forfeit of their crime. Aye, lead them to slaughter, whose sins can only be expunged with blood. Revenge shall be mine—highly-prized revenge ! Yes, I see them—there, the knife sinks deep in their hearts ! Yes, again the uplifted arm does its duty ! Strike—strike home !” and he clenched his fists, as if the executioner of the bloody deed he imagined. “ But wait !” and he made an effort to strike—“ it has not succeeded. There !

there !”—he made stabs —“ that may do !” Again his limbs were convulsed with agony, and began to grow cold and benumbed. His eye glistened with fervour, as he exclaimed “ Yes, that will do !” His frame now tottered, and he seemed irrecoverably gone : he yet, however, made another effort at speech.

“ Where are they gone to ? I saw them here,” he exclaimed wildly. “ What, then ! have I failed ? has my dagger proved untrue ? No, never !”—and he swooned.

It was with considerable difficulty that we reanimated him. In a short time, he made another desperate trial to articulate, but in vain. “ Mool—Mool—Mool—lah,” died off upon his tongue ; and, at the same instant, his death, fraught with agony, and the destruction of my hopes, founded upon his expected confession, ensued. Oh ! could you have witnessed his demoniacal attempts to produce the word he wished to utter, it would have overcome you. I shall never forget them. His eyes sparkled for the last time with the energy of his endeavours. He clenched his hands—opened his mouth—gasped

for breath—struggled violently—kicked about—whilst the veins of his neck and face became swollen almost to bursting, with the last rush of blood through their channels, impelled by his violence. Yet one more convulsion—and he remained lifeless in my arms!

“What a mistake,” exclaimed the Irish sub. “What, then, he died out-right;—well, now that was a pity. But, upon the whole, he died bravely, and as he ought to have done. None of your simpering, like an ensign said once to a certain gallant colonel, who, in the evening, was making his will, with tears in his eyes, fearing the expected battle on the next morning,—none of your simpering,—but I forget,—go on my friend,”—and the narrator continued.

Rage and disappointment now gained a complete mastery over my feelings;—annoyance, as great as this, I had never before encountered. Dashing the gashed and wounded body on the ground, I rushed, like a madman, from the loathing scene. Pressing forward with impetuous haste, my gaze suddenly rested upon the two moollahs and Abdoollah. No sooner did they

perceive my frantic state of mind, than their anxiety discovered to them, that I had not succeeded in gaining from the Bheel, a full disclosure of their guilty part in the late tragical scene. They must, doubtless, from their position, have heard my solemn protestations to the dying man. They now lost no time in endeavouring to turn this auspicious failure into a benefit for themselves, in like manner as the traveller would fan a spark into a flame, when oppressed with cold.

No sooner did they see me approaching, than, lighting up their countenances with well feigned joy, which almost urged me to sacrifice them, they simultaneously exclaimed, “*Khoda afreen!**—*Ulhumdulillah!*—he is safe!—he lives!—the arm of youth, and the hand of courage, has prevailed! Praised be Allah! Where are the miscreant murderers?—let us see them!”

“But wait, what causes this blood on your garments,” added Moollah Hachim, “you are not hurt, I hope, are you? *Yah illah*, may God avert it!”

* *Khoda afreen*.—God be praised.

“No,” I replied, in a sullen, haughty tone, “I am not, and what can prove a greater source of regret to you, my friends, than to be made acquainted with my safety?”

“What words are these?” exclaimed Moollah Hachim, as if in surprise. “What can this mean? Are we, who have come hither solely upon your account, to provide for your safety, by prayer,—are we, I say, to have our faces blackened with suspicion? You surely would not wish to act thus towards us, and make us bathe the beard of sincerity, with the tears of sorrow. You cannot, surely, suppose we know any thing of the matter, farther than having to fly from the tomb, in haste, to save our lives.”

“But I do, though, and have only spoken the words of truth,” I exclaimed, “you base, cowardly villains! Can you ask me such questions, and think to cheat or defraud me any longer, because your language is couched in soft words? No! no! trust me, your duplicity is full well-known, my *friends*.”

The fakeer now approached with my horse, for which I had despatched him.

“What then,” said Moollah Ibrahim, in a

hasty tone, "are you going to desert us? How shall we, unacquainted with the use of any weapon, manage to reach our home in safety? Ahmedabad is far distant."

"I know not how you will get on," I rejoined, "and care not how far the city is off. But take my advice, ye canting hypocrites. Abandon the service of Allah, for which ye are unfit, aye, unworthy, and adopt the characters you are born to shine in—that of knaves. It is a pity such transcendant cunning, as you possess, should not be cultivated. The same swords which were uplifted to harm me, cannot again be used, but money may yet purchase others in your self-defence, so I advise you to try and obtain them."

"But what folly is this?" continued Moollah Hachim, "and why are we detained? I swear to make this known to every true Mahommedan, whom my exhortation, from the minaret above, collects in the mosque below."

The word "folly," scarce sounded on my hearing, ere my unsheathed sword demanded its recall. The blow which, in an angry moment, succeeded, levelled at the moollah, fell harmless, as he

stepped back, and escaped my fury. Abdoollah seized my arm in his nervous grasp. By the advice and interference of the fakeer, I was somewhat soothed, and again let it slumber in its scabbard.

“But mark me,” I continued, “Moollah Hachim, God is merciful, and placed my friends near me in the hour of peril,—can you understand me? The beardless youth, who cannot recognise beauties in a rounded arm, and tapering waist, such as —, can fight in self-defence.

“Is it here alone, Moollah Ibrahim,” I said, “that the fakeer is an intruder? Remember the last day of the Mohurram. The wearied traveller will quench his thirst at the nearest well or fountain. Lynx-eyed monster that he is, he did so,—that accursed fakeer,—or can the jadooghers conjure up to your imaginations, when he restrained the impetuosity of the colt?”

The moollahs were gazing at each other, as each word fell upon their hearing, in mutual surprise, and trembling with astonishment, when I mounted my horse, and followed by the fakeer, dashed forward. Keeping my heels close in my

horse's sides, little caring where my progress directed me, I continued hurrying on, without harbouring a moment's reflection. Such was my flight, that I should have seemed to others, desirous to outstrip myself, and leave my thoughts behind. My companion at last, finding he was unable to cope with my fleet horse any longer, demanded of me a moment's respite.

“Mounted as you are, young man, and urging on your horse, whither are you going? You should consider, I say,” he ejaculated, “or how can your faithful servant keep the eye of anxiety resting upon your safety, if you thus desert him. It is impossible; indeed, it is : pray listen to me.”

Heedless, however, I continued my flight, whilst ‘Rustum Khan,’ was repeated several times; at first in a stentorian tone, which, however, became at every moment, less distinct, as I was fast leaving the voice behind me. Reason returned, and I checked my career—reined in my horse, and turned, to seek my companion with my eye. The fakeer, in his assumed garments, mounted on his fatigued pony, breathless with exercise, after a while, joined me. I could no

longer restrain my violence ; bursts of passion, and abusive epithets, I freely indulged, and by these means, helped my fury to subside a little ; although sufficient yet remained, to keep me tremblingly alive to the effects of passion.

“What have you done?” said the old fellow, panting for breath. “Have you not, young man,—have you not, I say, destroyed all the fond hopes you have so long cherished ; in displaying to those hypocrites, your knowledge of the game they have been hitherto playing with impunity, and free from suspicion ? What faults, youth and inexperience make us guilty of ! Doubtless, they will abscond, immediately after their return to Murdan Khan’s dwelling. But never mind ; that which is ordained, cannot be frustrated. You are safe, and that is all I have to care about. I think we had now better regain your father’s dwelling, with all dispatch.—What say you ?”

“Lead the way, then, if I must,” I peevishly exclaimed ; “for I am too much engrossed with the anticipated result of my folly and rashness, much to mind whither I direct my way. Bend your face in the direction you mention, and I will

follow ; although there is little to entice me to return to my own home ; for, in the state of feverish excitement I now suffer from, I am ill prepared to receive rebuke, however justly I may merit it."

The certainty I entertained of the moollahs absconding, from a consciousness of their being discovered, so imprudently hinted at by myself, in their presence, ere I left the place, where they were detained by my servant, drove me to distraction. That I should reap nothing but disappointment, in return for keeping my wounded feelings in check, in order to maintain that secrecy, on which I had founded my anticipations of revenge, came over my mind, in all the horror of certainty, and with galling bitterness. Again, on my return to the place of my nativity, what could I look forward to—but the most severe reprehensions from the parent I had offended ; which, the affection I bore towards him, would render yet more overwhelming in effect. And then, where was the object of my first love ? Her, on whom I had gazed but yesterday, and been assured she loved me in return. Yes ! But then, might she not feel offended at my

leaving Ahmedabad, without seeing her; although she had honoured me with her confidence, and even sought an interview with me, which I was forced to refuse. My mind, in its misgivings, checked all other emotions for the moment, to paint her to my frenzied imagination, as worked upon by an authoritative parent, to abandon me for ever. And although the sun's scorching heat, and the vivid brightness of the glare, convinced me I was fully awake, the dream of horror which overcast my excited imagination, portrayed her as immured within that harem; the result of which, from sad experience, I dared not contemplate, without shrinking with horror at the idea.

"It shall not be," I ejaculated, aloud: "no, never, whilst my arm, nerved with rancorous hate, and its kindred maddening feelings, can strike a blow, to avert it. No, never shall such a prize be the victim of disappointment in the arms of a dotard. No, she shall be mine, unless fate ordains it otherwise."

"Who are you talking of in this enthusiastic manner?" exclaimed my companion; "who is she, who has poured the burning oil of early

love upon your heart, to make you shudder at anticipation?"

"No one, nobody," I rejoined carelessly ;—"what are you dreaming of when you talk of love and oil, and such stuff. But mark me! I am bewildered. What with the annoyance attending a recollection of my folly, which I suffer from, and a consciousness that my father's resentment, on account of my conduct, will be too severe for my present unhappy state of mind to support, I am become as one in a delirium, who, in the phrenzy of his fancy, conjures up phantoms to gaze upon, which, although in themselves of momentary existence, awaken impressions which time alone can efface, after the return of reason. But what village is this we are approaching? Let us gain it speedily, and obtain guides to pursue our journey, without fear of losing our way, as I am wearied in the extreme.

"And so am I," said the unthinking subaltern. The Mahommedan immediately arose, took a little pan, gave me a farewell benediction, and passed on.

I threw myself upon my sofa, by way of a hint

to my friend, who was lighting a fresh cigar, and giving his orders for another tumbler-full of grog. Hearing no mention of saddling his horse, I composed myself, and soon, sleep estranged him from my thoughts, thus terminating an evening, which otherwise might have been rendered unpleasantly tedious.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(Night the Fifth.)

“ From famine and distress, we have escaped to repose,
“ We have gained fresh life, and a fresh world.”

Túrki.

AT the earliest dawn, my horsekeeper aroused me, as usual, to acquaint me that Irakee was ready for me to mount; “ and shall I unloose his head and heel ropes?”

“ Just as you like,” I replied, “ but I am not over anxious to indulge myself with a constitutional ride, unless you are acquainted with some spot worth cantering on to, and can ensure me a companion.”

“ Why will not this gentleman do,” said my menial, “ who is asleep under the table? Oh,

master! how could master sleep, for never was there such a noise in these gardens before, as this Saheb made. About two o'clock, I felt repeated blows with bamboo, and could not imagine whence they came. At last, I slept with one eye open, and caught master's friend, who was hidden as yet, behind the meendy hedge, close by which I was sleeping. As I jumped up, and was in the act of putting my pugrie on, he gave me a push, and I fell over my wife and child, and almost killed them. They then began to roar aloud, and Saheb obliged me to silence them, giving them, at the same time, a rupee, which had the desired effect."

"Now lift me upon your shoulders, Ghora-wallah," he said, "so that I can climb up into that tree. Now fetch master's fishing-rod and line,—it stands in the left corner of the great room,—make no noise, or I'll break your head, you villain! That is old Mahomed to the right, is it not?—he loves a joke,—now fix the hook to the sheet which covers him."

"But master must not pull, recollect, till I am asleep."

“ Oh no, not at all,” Saheb said. “ Now hand me up that long bamboo, having first fixed to the end of it, a coujah of water, and when Mahomed gets up, bring him under the tree.”

“ But master will be angry.”

“ Hang master,” he replied, “ what do I care. Recollect, if you don’t do as I bid you, I am awake, and can thrash you, which master’s sound sleep prevents his doing. Now off with you,” and I lay down.

In a few minutes the Saheb pulled the line,—up to the tree went Mahomed’s sheet and pugrie,—he sprung up,—roared out “ Choor! choor! puckerlow! *—here, faneus lao, † Ghorawallah ‡ Mussaul! §—Dobie || Itherow!—choor!—choor!”—and he ran as fast as he could up the avenue, which aided the intended deception.

* *Choor, choor, puckerlow.*—Thief, thief, seize him.

† *Faneus lao.*—Bring a lanthorn.

‡ *Ghorawallah.*—Horsekeeper.

§ *Mussaul,*—is here used to denominate a second servant.

|| *Dobie.*—Washerman.

He soon, however, returned, and began, holding a stick in one hand, and a light in the other, to search in every direction.

“Now, Khoda Kurreem,” ejaculated the butler, “he is an active fellow, that, or my eyes were not fairly open when I pursued him, or he is a conjuror, and can make himself invisible. I should like to awaken master before I plunge among these trees, for I am sure he must be hidden near; but I am somewhat afraid, unless, Mussaul, you will tell him, that his camp-case is gone, or his gun-case stolen.”

“Not I,” rejoined the person spoken to. “I am not over anxious to feel the weight of his fist again. Do you recollect when he caught me, that rainy night, drinking his health, how he returned thanks?”

By this time, we had neared, by degrees, the tree in which the Saheb was concealed.

“He must be behind that hedge,” said Mahomed, and stooping forward, looked round the end of it. Whack went the bamboo, upon his ribs. “Yah, Khodah,—Oh, God!—Yey Keea,—what is this?” said the old man, placing his hand

upon his side, "some gin* is here. Yah, Khodah, what a blow!—who did it?"

"Hum ko malum ney, I do not know," said the dobie.

"Keea pouchtey ho, what do you ask," said another.

"Hum kooch dekhta ney, I see nothing," exclaimed I.

"But I feel it, though," rejoined the querist. "I have it,—he is in the tree,—fetch me master's gun. Yah, Khodah, my ribs are broken," and holding up the lanthorn as high as he could, he bent his gaze upon the tree, when, down dropt the coujah, and broke into a thousand pieces, over the old man's head, and drenched him, as well as others, with water. All now scampered off. Saheb gained the palace, threw himself upon the floor, and calling us all to his presence, desired to know what noise that was. Mahomed could not answer, for he was ignorant, and is, up to this moment, as to whom annoyed him.

"Well," said I, "you may off, horsekeeper,

* *Gin*.—Fairy.

for I am going to sleep, as I must have a dream or two about what you have told me." Upon this, a burst of laughter ensued.

"Not if I can prevent it," said the person hitherto sleeping upon the ground, as he jumped up, "for I am bent upon a morning's coursing, so up and away at once."

Accordingly I complied, and was amply repaid for having denied myself another, and another nap, until mid-day might have found me slumbering, in obtaining from the invigorating effects of the morning breeze, and exercise, a good appetite.

As we were discussing our dried pomfret and rice, curried cabobs, making a finish with Hoffman's currant jelly, and sipping Mocha coffee, my friend's servant brought him a letter from his tent, with a change of apparel.

"Why, Tom!" he ejaculated, as he burst open the seal, "here is news! of course you will accompany me: I'll have no refusal. A hog hunt, in three days hence. Hurrah! I'm off! Move along, you slow ones—what! afraid of a milk bush hedge?—spin through it! Oh, you mighty

Nimrod—what, scared at a twelve-feet ditch, mounted as you are? Take my advice—either sell your horse, or follow me at once. Just touch him with the rowels, and over he flies. Confusion seize it!” he continued, having put himself in a hunting posture, “if that griffin on the tall chesnut has not got the hog to himself! What a chasm!—screws him up, and at it. Cleverly done!--I certainly gain upon him—that’s a miss, old boy—you must have my knowing touch—(must he not, Tom?) before he can take a first spear—again, you should not lean too much forward, or you’ll fall. What do you know about it? When your face is as yellow as mine is, you may, perhaps, have learned something. What, pulled up! I suppose something a-head. Now’s my time—give old Blunderbuss, my bay, his head; shoot past him—clear all obstacles—and the game’s my own! Blown. are you, General Dookur? then there’s for you—there’s a full stop for you. Aye, punctuation, is it not? in goes the spear—aye, but no delay. I’m off—here, you boy,” addressing his servant, “pack up the kit, and be careful of my hog-spears—as they are bent or

broken, you may depend upon hearing from me. Put my best tops in your pugrie, for, if the cattle upset in the river at Lallee, they will be spoiled, and that won't do. Tell the horse-keepers to give a ball or two to each horse, and as much grain as they will eat; and then, I think, we'll shew them a trick. You come, do you not, Tom?"

"Not I," I replied, "I shall not go all that way back again."

"Then stop here, and hear that old blockhead go on with his story. No, no; I must confess I was amused—but a hog hunt!—it is irresistible, sir. I say there's a sort of compulsion, and follow I must. I shall send my hack to Lallee; lend me one of your raw-boned toothless nags, whose fat does not interfere with their going as far as that, will you?"

"Yes, with all my heart; but forbear to give all your spurring to my piece of blood!"

"Oh yes! oh yes! I shall be back for tiffin; but if I do not stir up my fellows, they will be only thinking of going for the next two hours!"

His horse was brought to the door, and away he went.

To tell you the truth, reader, I was not sorry he intended to leave me on this occasion, as a native does not like to be quizzed, and the sub.'s bad Hindostanee, in which he misused words, when added to his usually rough manner, and ignorance of many of their peculiarities, threatened to put a check to his visits.

Tiffin time came, and soon after, the huntsman, clad in the most ridiculously flash costume I ever saw.

"Roused them out," he roared. "They are off at last! Why, when I got to my tent, they were beginning to cook a repast, and some of them were smoking. Water soon quenched the ignited fires, and a few threats put the whole group in motion, to assist the striking of the tent. Lots of grumbling—but that, like the old skipper's beer on board the ship I came out in, did no one any good. Ah, Tom, that puts me in mind—poor Eliza is dead: the brutal treatment of her husband, the hot wind, liver, and cholera, sufficed to end her misfortunes. By heavens! I pitied her; could I have married her, I would have done so, for I sincerely loved her:

she was so amiable, lovely, and good-natured. You know, on board, I kicked one of the mates out of the cuddy, for looking at her. What right had a fellow like that to look at beauty? let him make spun-yarn into swabs, or cock-roaches into curries: no, no; and then, after all, to see her linked for life to such a stumpy, ill-shaped, calomel-visaged fellow, as him she married. But I'll say no more, until I meet him, when, perhaps, he will be able to understand me!"

Our conversation during tiffin was all about hog hunting; and, when he started on my horse, he gave me a specimen of how kindly he meant to use him, by leaping the hedge, gaining a ploughed portion of the gardens—now dashing at full speed here, now there—turning right and left, brandishing his spear, wounding the clods of earth; and finished by offering five hundred rupees for my horse, which I accepted; and two days after he sent the money.

In my evening's ride through the city, I fell in with the Mahommedan, who accompanied me home, and, after a few observations, recommenced his narrative thus:—"We proceeded at a

walk, conversing as we went, upon the late unfortunate occurrences :—

“ What can possess you, my young friend ?” continued my sage counsellor, the old fakeer ; who, in his assumed garments, appeared so much like a Gosayen, that I could scarcely believe I was not travelling with an idolater ; “ again, I say, what can possess you ? I am truly astonished, and at a loss to conjecture ! What phrenzied feeling—is it love, or madness, that has so suddenly overtaken you, that you cannot even abstract yourself from its influence for a moment, to allow recollection to have its usual sway. To ask from me, with such well-feigned ignorance, ‘ What village is this we are approaching ?’ as if you could possibly require my assistance to recal its name to your memory. Now, pause for a moment, and reflect : look at that pagoda ! behold that tamarind-tree ! gaze upon that tomb !—and can you then require me to aid you by explanation ?”

“ Yes, such is needful, friend, I can assure you,” I replied, “ if you wish me to know what I have asked ; for, what with the loss of blood

from my wound, and the effects of disappointment, I am totally bewildered—indeed, I may say, mad. At all events, let us canter on, and rest awhile, ere we resume our journey.”

“With all my heart!” roared out the fakeer; there is nothing I shall more enjoy than a halt, for my limbs ache again. I am one of those, whom experience has made a sage of!”—here he laughed, as if ashamed of his egotism—“and who delights in mitigating fatigue, with a chillum and a short repose—and why, when it can be obtained, should we refuse it? No, never of my own accord will I do so! We shall be enabled to find a well in those gardens, when we alight there; where we can perform our ablutions, prior to mid-day prayers, whilst our cattle eat their grain, and enjoy a draught. Let us hasten on—I am somewhat anxious to arrive. But let me think!—we must repair, with your approbation and consent, Rustum, to the serai, in the village, where I hope an old friend of mine, if he has been spared by death, will be found ever ready to assist me, as hitherto he has always been.”

Our approach now continued over a heavy sandy road, skirted on either side with patches of garden ground, nurtured by irrigation. The broad walks which intersected these, were edged with channels of flowing water, over which, lofty tamarind trees preserved a cool, refreshing shade. How I longed to plunge into the midst of the darkness which reigned in the large plantations of guava and plantain trees which we passed, where I could have eased my eye-sight, wearied with the glare ; or to refresh at those basins close by, which were ever and anon filled with the contents of the bucket, as it emptied itself when once raised above the level of the well. But the fakeer, at the instance of hunger, and with shelter a-head, kept urging his tattoo on, and gave me no time to gratify my desires.

As yet, I must confess, I had not the slightest idea of what village we were about to enter ; but on alighting at the serai, who could be deceived ? To my surprise, I recognised an old halting-place, which my father and myself had annually visited, during a term of several years, on our way, to join a Juttra, held during each, on

a day appointed, at a short distance from the village gates, in commemoration of a most religious man, who had been endeared to posterity as a saint, for his many virtuous deeds; and whose place of rest was the resort of thousands, once in twelve months, on the day corresponding to that on which he had resigned himself to the mercy of God.

But with what different feelings did I now enter the building, to those I had hitherto experienced in hastening up the steps leading to the arched door-way. My wounded state, exhausted frame, excited mind, a prey to conflicting passions, goaded by disappointment, and heated with youthful love, which, when returned, I was forced to abandon at the will of others—I formed a sorry contrast to the lively, ingenuous boy, giddy with pleasure, who had formerly alighted there. The sunshine of boyhood had lost its magic ray, which lighted up the hour of life into one bright noon-day, and was now hidden in the clouded horizon of the earliest dawn of those cares, attendant on our pilgrimage through life. All my former impetuosity was at that instant

checked, and for the first time since my nativity, did I enter the resting-place of the wearied traveller, more oppressed in mind, than worn out with exercise. My thoughts were gloomy in the extreme, now reverting to this, and now to that, which had happened to frustrate my happiness. And then, again, these questions would force themselves upon my notice:—Where was my sister, Noorumbie, so much beloved, so young and beautiful? and where my father? doubtless anxiously awaiting my arrival,—the former, to lavish on me those marks of sisterly affection she had ever entertained for me,—and the latter, doubtless, concerting measures with which to punish my wilful disobedience of his orders. My procrastinated delay, must, I felt assured, have violently augmented his passion, and was it likely, that he, with whom implicit obedience alone could find favour, would visit a crime like mine, with a punishment insufficient to act as an example, and excite terror in the minds of the whole household.

Nor could I blame him,—my conscience smote me. Such a chain of ideas as this, brought

little consolation to my mind,—my spirits were fast sinking into despondency. I could have plunged my dagger into my heart; but, no, there was one yet extant, whom I loved, and she it was who disarmed me, and made me wish to live, as soon as the pleasing recollection of her fairy form flashed across my mind.

As I knew that full twelve coss yet remained, for me to traverse, I bound up my wound as well as I could, and lay down to catch a few moments' repose. Fatigue, in this instance, performed its duty, stood my friend, and forced me, in spite of all the bitter anguish which disturbed me, into the oblivion of a sound repose.

About that period of the afternoon, when all true Mahommedans spread the carpet of piety, from which they offer up, it is to be hoped, an acceptable and sincere numaz, to the all-merciful Allah, my companion awakened me.

Having partaken of a repast furnished by the kind hospitality of an aged man, a Cazi, whose countenance was the very opposite to that of Moollah Hachim, the accursed fiend I had left behind me, full of benign expression, and whose

language was full of compassion, as well as his actions were of active interference in our behalf, my spirits were considerably improved, so that I was desirous to start. I became most restless, and anxious to reach my home. But no, it was impossible, at once, to move the fakeer, whose love of conversation, and indulgence in a chillum,* alike interposed, to prevent my carrying my wishes into execution. Again, the host seemed little disposed to part with his guests, and furnished excuses as numerous as my requests. Between the fakeer and this much-beloved man, a friendship had been, in early youth, cemented, which the increase of years only tended to confirm. So that they had much to converse about, relating not only to those happy hours they had spent together, but including an absence of ten years from each other's sight, in which great changes, and unfavourable ones, for the interests of Mahommedans, had taken place. At length, we took a hasty farewell of the old man, and guided our refreshed

* *Chillum*.—The contents of tobacco used, at once, in a hookah.

horses towards the object of our intentions. My patience was completely exhausted: I kept my heels to my horse's sides, without intermission. Thus we travelled onwards, at first, with all expedition, as the darkening shadows of the evening were fast falling on the objects around, and threatened to delay us. To these, however, succeeded the pale light of the new moon, which served to guide us in the track we pursued. Our pace (for I was forced, you see, Saheb, to moderate my speed, on account of my companion) was but a moderate amble. For the last few coss, until our horses' hoofs clattered amongst the loose bricks and scattered stones, strewn amongst the ruinous outskirts of the little village we were making for, and of which my father's dwelling was the chief ornament, my limbs trembled, and my mind misgave me.

As yet we heard nothing of the faithful Abdoollah; whom, I must acknowledge, was very unjustly and unthinkingly deserted; but we had enjoined the Cazi to acquaint him of our having gone on homewards, should he, in following us,

reach, by chance, the village at which we had halted.

Ere two watches of the night had passed away, we had alighted at the fakeer's house, where, when I dismounted, I thought my wasted and exhausted strength seemed incompetent to support me. I had my horse picketted near my companion's tattoo, until the following morning, when, having bidden the trust-worthy old fellow an adieu, I stumbled on, up the main street, much resembling a drunken man, or one so much afflicted with rheumatism, that in his progress onwards, he can scarcely preserve his balance.

The cramps and pains which accompanied the movement of each muscle, which I suffered from, during the time I occupied in traversing a few hundred yards, must have been felt by another, before he can fully understand their severity from my description. Yah Khodah, it was almost past endurance. At length I reached the precincts of the well-known court-yard, supported myself, for an instant, against the banyan tree in its centre, rested awhile, and at length stole

quietly past the domestics, who were arranged, locked in sleep, in the verandah of my father's house, and gained my sister Noorumbie's apartment; this was situated, as chance had directed, in a distant angle of the building to that where my father had chosen one for himself, and in which I had often received from him such reproofs as my boyish errors deserved.

"Noorumbie! Noorumbie!" I exclaimed, in a faint voice, as I approached the cot on which she was reclining. "Noorumbie!" and I touched her gently, in order to arouse her without alarm. "Noorumbie, awake!—your long-lost Rustum has returned!—it is he, who has entered your apartment."

No sooner did she hear my well-known voice, than raising herself with precipitation, and springing from her couch, the little angel flew on the wings of affection, and embraced me warmly. It made me quite forget the sorrows and misfortunes I had endured. I felt, as my head reclined upon her bosom, as though I had reached a place of safety.

"Oh, Rustum! Rustum!" she ejaculated, when

recovered a little from her surprise, whilst the tears of joy, summoned by my return, stood bright and shining in her eyes, like dew-drops on the mangoe leaf; “what have you not been guilty of, in going to Ahmedabad! Oh, Rustum! what hours of care and anxiety have fallen to my lot on your account. My father says he has strictly forbidden you to go there, or, as he terms it, to the accursed city, since it is in the hands of idolaters;—and yet no sooner does the hand of oppression call him elsewhere—a mandate which anxiety for your welfare alone compels him to obey—than you take such undue advantage of his absence. But do not look so ashamed, or I will not communicate any more to you.

“Do you know he quite frightened me on the evening of his return, insomuch so, that I am quite certain you will have much difficulty in appeasing his wrath. On his arrival I sought him, and found him discomfited with the obstinate refusal to grant him his rights, which he had experienced at Currie; almost, I may say, mad with anger; he would, he declared, burn the bigoted fanatic out of his dwelling; drew his

sword, and swore never to sheathe it until moistened with the blood of his foe—and there it hangs in his room without a scabbard. Indeed, he seems so distressed in mind, that my feelings overpowered me, and I ventured to offer him condolence, although you know, dear brother, how often he has rebuked us for meddling, as he calls it, with his affairs. On this occasion he became furious, and desired me to quit him.—‘Go,’ said he, ‘and seek a father who will admit your freedom.’ In the midst of my tears to see him thus oppressed, he ejaculated, with vehemence, whilst his countenance was darkened with frowns—‘Where is my son, your brother—where is he, I say? I pause for a reply; deceive me not, for know I will.’

“What could I say, ignorant of your probable return, not having heard from you since your departure, and not daring to utter a falsehood in his presence, which he says he can excuse in no one but a base idolater, what could I do?—My affection for you on the one hand checked my desire to disclose all to him; and, on the other, I could devise nothing plausible to excuse

you. I hung my head, and preserved a silence. Again he exclaimed, his eye burning with angry fire, and his upraised arm ready to strike, but recollecting himself he again lowered it—‘Where is he, where is my son? not absent, I should suppose; if he is, he well merits what he will receive.’

“I yet abstained from acknowledging that you had gone to Ahmedabad, and as often as I endeavoured to reply, my stammering only increased his vehemence. Resuming a little composure, he added, in a taunting strain, ‘Is it thus I return to my dwelling, to have the ungrateful conduct of my children, in wilful disobedience, heaped upon me, after parental affection has made me a suppliant before a Brahmin, solely for their welfare! Accursed be the hour—if it is thus fate has designed my case as a parent—in which they were born, and may the vengeance of Allah’—

“Stop,” I rejoined, “my dearest father—call not curses down from heaven upon us, but rather ask of Him whose sacred name you have pronounced, the aid of his power to correct us and lead us the right way.” This staggered him for

the moment—his eye was moistened—he could not reply—nor could I proceed any farther at the instant. In a short time I burst into tears, which much relieved me: I implored his forgiveness for us both, ere I disclosed the truth to him. He could not brook the delay, and exclaimed, ‘Is my son then dead, or murdered, that my child thus refuses to grant my hearing a knowledge of where he is?’

“ ‘No, he is not, thanks to Allah,’ I rejoined; ‘he is not dead, or murdered—but he is absent, I regret to say, on a visit to Ahmedabad.’

“ ‘On a visit to’—and he paused. ‘After all my care and trouble, to see him, I suppose, a renegade to the religious feelings I have endeavoured to instil into his mind. No! it shall never be; for I would sooner that the murderer’s knife should silence his tongue for ever. Here, you domestics—who is in waiting?—I say, where are you?’ On this the affrighted servants hastened towards him. ‘You have my orders,’ he said, addressing them, and laying particular emphasis on the words—‘you have my orders, recollect, never to admit Rustum Khan, my unde-

serving son—who has blinded the eye of my affection towards him for ever—into my household again.’ And for this purpose they have ever since slept in the verandah, having had his orders repeated daily. Pray how did you escape past them ?”

“ Why, my dearest Noorumbie,” I said, imprinting the kiss of affection upon her lovely cheek, “ to tell you the truth, they are all fast asleep—and did not perceive me, although I had to step over each severally on my way hither—one I thought I had trodden upon, and halted for a moment ; he turned upon the ground, but never opened his eyes.”

“ Asleep, indeed, Rustum—after my father’s particular injunctions to them to watch by turns ; this I cannot comprehend, and I warrant the bastinado will be handsomely at work to-morrow. I cannot but fear the result of their negligence, and should not be surprised if they suffer severely. But never mind, my dearest Rustum,” she continued, “ you now are here, and in safety, which at all events I am certain will be pleasing to my father. Yes, as much so as a fatted antelope is

pleasant to the eye of the hungry tiger, when within his power. My endeavours shall not be wanting to take your part, and do you know I am a bit of a favourite; although (guided by the well-known generosity of the female mind) I seldom presume upon it. But let that rest, and tell me something about the fine city you have been tarrying in. What marvellous adventures have you encountered? What sort of a place is it? Are the houses finer than ours? for you know I have never been there; so do tell me; I am all anxiety to hear your adventures. What a *tumasha** you must have beheld, in witnessing the last night of the *mohurram*! Oh, how I longed to be with you! I understand the gay and busy scene, that presents itself on such an occasion, is beyond belief. How I wish! I cannot help repeating, that I had been with you. Much as the old *moollah* (peace be with him!) used to abhor the sight of one of the *taboots*,† I

* *Tumasha*.—Spectacle, sight, show.

† *Taboot*.—A light mausoleum, made according to fancy in imitation of that consecrated to the memory of Hussein Houssein.

am sure I cannot see any thing disgusting or displeasing in those beautiful and light mausoleums of gilt paper, which are carried about in procession. Besides, my father admires them, and I am sure he is regular in his prayers: I have even known him exceed the stated number of five numaz daily, for months together, and that would prove him a true Mahommedan. He would not, moreover, allow us to do any thing unbecoming our dignity as believers in the most holy Prophet Mahomet. I am sure I should never tire of peeping through the screens at them, parading about by torch-light: it must be very delightful! But come, Rustum, why so silent? tell me something about the great city. If you could only appreciate my anxiety, you would not delay replying to my queries. I am so glad you are returned; for, during your absence, I have not known a moment's pleasure. No doubt you can now take the part of a story-teller on yourself; for who ever has been to Ahmedabad, without acquiring the experience of a sage, or the sagacity of a calundar? you will not have to depend any longer on the old fakeer, for the sub-

stance of a tale to recount to me. What a happy time I shall now have of it, if we can quiet the anger of our father ; but that is a sorry task to contemplate."

Thus did she press question upon question upon my attention, mingling affection with curiosity, in the giddy light-heartedness of her youth, as yet unchecked by the bridle of affliction. She was possessed of spirit which knew no controul. Moreover, having had no real knowledge of misfortune, to try her bending disposition of mind, and constantly confined within the necessary restraints under which all modest women of our caste are, and must ever be continued, she thought, doubtless, I had returned from the capital in the same unruffled state of indifference with which I had entered it. If such were her conjectures, how sadly was she mistaken. Could she, I thought, but have read the real state of mind I laboured under, how widely different would her conduct have been. But that was as truly impossible as it was for me to ease her with a disclosure of all that had occurred, or with a single word in explanation. I hung my head

with shame, being much alarmed at the hopeless case my situation with my father had reduced me to, as developed in her conversation.

“But why so sorrowful, why so downcast, Rustum,” she continued, nothing daunted at my taciturnity; “If your father is angry, recollect I warned you not to go; and surely, on this account, you cannot be displeased with me; or if you are, will it be just or generous on your part? No, it will not; therefore you shall smile upon me, at all events, my dearest brother; for I love you with all sincerity, as my heart can testify. Come, cheer up towards me, I say; be not so downcast and unhappy; and I will reward you with another kiss. Will that do, or can I prepare you some sherbet?”

“Noorumbie,” I replied, in a faint low voice, I want nothing but rest and quiet. Press me not at present for any explanation, for I am ill prepared to give you one. Believe me, my stay at Ahmedabad has furnished nothing which can interest you. I can appreciate your kind affection, and shall ever bear you in my mind as the sister who well merits to be beloved. But under-

stand, it is not that I am angry with you, which makes me silent, but I am wearied and fatigued in mind and body, and require a lengthened repose ere I can prepare for the much-dreaded interview with my father ; and what is more—lift up the light,” I continued, raising my pugrie with my hand, “ and look at this wound, which I have received from the hands of others upon my head. It almost overpowers me ; come, get me a little plaster, or a cool plantain leaf, to bind it up with as soon as possible, for it is stiff, and painful in the extreme. This, perhaps, will account for my not being able to satisfy your curiosity.—Doubt not my affection for you, Noorumbie,” I exclaimed, laying hold of her arm, and bending my eyes upon her face, “ for I love you as sincerely as your amiable conduct merits, or my brotherly love can prompt me to entertain for you.”

Casting her gaze for an instant on the cut I had received from one of my antagonists, when attacked in the tomb, she started back from me in alarm, exclaiming in a faltering tone—“ Wounded you are truly, Rustum !—how have you managed to reach us ? Oh, what a gash !—why you must be dying ! Oh, my brother, what

shall I do? Yah illah." She now uttered a loud shriek, and fell backwards insensible upon her couch.

"Wounded," ejaculated the awakened servants, who were always in close attendance, near my sister's room, "what do we hear? pray who is wounded?"

"No one," I replied; "retire to rest."

"Why, when did you arrive, Rustum Khan? and what terrible cut do I perceive over your forehead?" said the foremost among them. "Why how comes this?"

"Go," continued another, "and fetch our master instantly. Fly, run! or you shall suffer for it: awaken him without delay, or by the beard of the Prophet, if any thing goes wrong, we shall hear of it!"

And ere I had sufficiently awakened from the state of surprise and consternation, (my sister having fainted, and my father being sent for, had thrown me into) her mother and the whole of the domestics, male and female, had congregated. The room was crowded to excess: in fine, there was no moving, without either treading upon others, or being trod upon oneself.

“ Oh, Rustum Khan,” said Noorumbie’s mother, “ I who have always considered you as my own son, in the absence of being gifted with one, in gazing upon whom I could gladden my sight, I must instantly know what has befallen you ! What need is there for concealment from those whom affection, when opposed to your misfortunes, will devise expedients to overcome them, as numerous as the particles of the sand in the desert, and as irresistible as the mountain torrent, in their effects ? Is it thus you return to the bosom of your family, to add to the unhappy state of mind, which pervades your father and myself ? What, no reply ; has guilt the power to silence you ? Where have you been ? and started hence, too, without acquainting me. Oh, it was too bad !—but I am inclined to think you did not intend to offend.”

The reproachful manner of her who thus addressed me, added pangs to my already distressed mind, and although worked upon by remorse, and yielding to its persuasive influence, I felt willing to disclose every occurrence : I was, however, unable to articulate.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(Fifth Night continued.)

“ The fear of death was removed from the heart.”

Persian.

IN this disconsolate mood, I continued gazing upon my apparently lifeless sister, Noorumbie, whose situation alarmed me in the extreme, and lending every aid, which I thought could ensure her speedy recovery ; but all proved abortive—she remained in the same state of stupor as before. The servants were, during this time, running to and fro for restoratives, or crowding around her they thought dead ; whilst Noorumbie's mother, distressed in the extreme, gave vent to her oppressed mind in bursts of violent sorrow, in which the female attendants also joined. Some,

as they beat their heads against the wall with unremitting violence, shrieked aloud; others merely wept; whilst many, more eager to testify their sorrow, or impatient to arouse my father, increased their lamentations during each moment of their existence, tore their hair, threw themselves upon the ground, and, in fine, threatened to destroy themselves.

In the midst of all this bustle and uproar, the powerful voice of my father, raised to its highest pitch, was heard—and instantly all was still again! The several vocal performers, whose poignant grief was so loudly expressed before, were now silent, and each endeavoured to screen himself behind the garment and shadow of her fellow-servant, lest she should first encounter the terrifying gaze of her master.

The sudden spring of a tiger, amidst a herd of antelopes, whilst gamboling near the banks of the nullah which concealed the foe from their sight, could not have produced more consternation, than the sounds which met the ears of the weeping dependants.

“Where is my son?” ejaculated the old man;

“ peace be with him ; I say, where is my son ? Hasten onwards—lead, oh ! lead me to the spot immediately. Where is he ? Do you hear me ? Wounded, did you say ?—wounded ! Have I rightly understood you ? No ! God forbid ! it cannot be ! Let me see him this moment ! Ease my anxiety, by shewing him to me at once, or pay the forfeit with your lives.

“ Away, to my only hope, that I may yet see him once more, ere he dies—bitter thought ! indeed it must not be. Oh, Allah ! is it thus I am to be deprived of the only prop of my existence ?—the image of his long-lost, much-loved mother ! Move—let me pass on, base-born villains ! before he is taken away : move, I say, let me see the corpse, and then I’ll plunge this dagger to my heart ! What now avails my living ? Hasten, do you hear ; run for the Bhat, who cured my rheumatism ; he lives close by, and is very skilful : yes, and bring Huckeem* Mahommed Ali with him, to my presence. Go, run, you lazy hurumzadehs ; arouse them, and let them forthwith be

* *Huckeem*.—Doctor.

brought, willing or not ! Use force—drag—pull—swear at them ; and do all but fail to produce them here.

“ Wounded ! and where ? Can you hear me, Rustum Khan, joy of my heart ! If so, speak but one word, to soften my grief when I am bereft of you ; let me hear your voice once more. Oh, where, where is my boy ? ”

“ Here, my respected father, and living,” I exclaimed ; and having pushed my way through the assembly, in rushing forward, was just in time to receive my over-anxious parent, who was on the point of falling, in my arms.

“ Here I am,” I again ejaculated, “ my dearest parent,” as I pressed him fondly in my embrace, “ come to ask forgiveness for my misconduct.”

Recollection now failed him for some time, for his intense excitement, acting upon his mind, which fostered every passion, whether of anger or of affection, in its most violent form, had overcome him completely : his senses were lost to him ; whilst his sleepy eye, which now rested full on my face, failed to recognise my features. This death-like state remained for a considerable

time; when, recovering by degrees, he kept his wandering gaze upon my features; and, after a momentary pause, and having regained his speech, he exclaimed—"It is he! Yah Ullah! thanks be to God! it is himself! I see him again! My son, my son! It is him!"—and he burst into tears. A few more minutes elapsed, whilst he thus vented his grief, and eased his over-burthened heart, before my father was completely restored.

Springing from the recumbent posture we had placed him in, he shouted out—"Did I not hear you were wounded? or who, in telling me a base falsehood, merits my vengeance? If so, shew me the wound, and let me know the miscreant's name, that the aged arm of your father may wreak a signal vengeance on him: age has not yet so crippled it, that it cannot revenge an injury. Where is he! let me know his residence and name, and I will teach him to assail the light of my hopes, and the joy of his father. Do you hear what I say? bring down to me, this instant, my trusty sword Badshah, and prepare Bourrauk, my horse, named after that of our

blessed Prophet, in order that I may hunt down the oppressor, who has injured my son."

"Patience, my dear father, for a moment," I exclaimed, "and I will explain every thing satisfactorily to you."

"No, no," continued my father, "no verbal explanations for me; you are exhausted, and even to speak must be a labour to you. I, on the contrary, have only just risen from the couch of repose, and am not quite so old as many mistake me for. No, I say, leave me to unravel the mystery, which I shall as easily and readily do, as I can unsheath my sword."

"But that is impossible!" I replied; "for the wretches who this morning sought the life of your son, in raising their weapons against him, have already received their deserts. Both are already slain, and that, without moving from the place they commenced their attack in."

"Shabash, shabash!" he exclaimed; "but go on—how was it?"

"Thus, my parent:—I was at prayer in an old ruinous tomb, near Butwah, you must understand; as far as which place myself and my two

companions, the old village fakeer, and our worthy domestic, Abdoollah, had arrived, without any disaster,"—here again he interrupted me—"Do not name them—the villains; name not them; but go on"—"two Bheels suddenly rushed in upon me. Having once heard that a very religious person, named Merwan, together with his wives, had been lately murdered near Ahmedabad, when at prayer in a mosque, I held myself in readiness, lest a similar attempt might be made upon me. There is, you must know, no safety to be found in that province. Accordingly, the ruffians had no sooner entered, than my sword was unsheathed; and I maintained an obstinate struggle to preserve my life, in a well-continued defence. Numerous were the cuts made at me, but my activity defied their prowess. Finding, however, my strength beginning to fail me, I deemed it advisable, having already wounded one of my assailants, who gave me a cut on my head in return, to open a way for my escape. Exclaiming 'Allah Acbar,' I sprang upon my foes, who instantly stepped back a pace or two, to escape my vengeance. Judge my surprise then, when my words were

answered to from without; and old Abdoollah, rushing in, severed the head of one of my assailants almost from his body, ere the first blow he aimed at him had performed its duty. This noble, faithful man, then attacked the other, and drew his attention towards himself. The bheel now tried to gain a corner, but, as he turned to do so, I wounded him so severely, that he fell to the ground. The fakeer, also, had entered the tomb, before the Bheel I have alluded to, so incautiously exposed himself, and your son wounded him in the right side. He was, indeed, a noble antagonist to oppose oneself to; but fate was against him, and, ere we quitted, his days were numbered. Having thus slaughtered both, the fakeer and myself, being best mounted, and anxious to relate what had occurred, hastened towards our homes, and should have been here ere sunset, but our fatigues demanded a short halt at a village, and Abdoollah is following us, doubtless."

Having thus ended, my narrative was succeeded by exclamations of "Khoda Kurreem!—Allah Acbar!—Ulhumdullillah!"—and several

others, both on my father's part, and that of the assembled household; they all seemed astounded at the result, and I thought my parent seemed dissatisfied that no one remained for him to try his skill upon.

When silence had succeeded to this burst of applause, and the vaulted rooms of the house had lent their last echoes to this enthusiastic burst of gratitude for my safety, my father, after a moment's consideration, commanding the attention of all around, inquired, "Is it then to old Abdoollah and the fakeer, as well as your own courage, that we owe your safety? If such is really the case, state so; if not, do not deceive me upon this head, for by the beard of Ali, a falsehood would make me hate you, if it did not lead me, in my passion, to assault your life. Can you fairly state that it was so, my son?"

"Yes, that I can, for it is due to them, that I should confess it," was my reply.

"How favourable for the old man," continued my father, his eyes sparkling with animation, as he spoke. "I am rejoiced beyond measure. It revives the gratitude I owe him, for the act of

saving my own life ; but what is that, compared to what he has now done? Nothing! I say,—let him who dares deny my assertion, prepare to disprove it. I had intended, on his return with you, to have had him severely bastinadoed, as well as beat with rattans, and being placed across a jackass, he was to have been banished, with every ignominious custom, these doors for ever. Had he answered my reviling, when suffering this punishment, I would have cut his tongue out—I had steeled my heart against him in every way. I too well knew every interference in his behalf would be made, and I was determined to exhibit all firmness, lest those who pleaded for him should be able to make me think lightly of the conduct he had been guilty of. But Providence or fate, I care not which, has furnished him with an appeal to my feelings, which, by Allah! shall meet the kind response it merits. Yes, Noorumbie, my daughter, come near and hear me,” he continued ; for, by this time, my sister having recovered from the state of insensibility, her first panic had thrown her into, had joined the party ; “ Yes, Noorumbie, I

do protest, for the future, I will put entire confidence in what you say, for you never deceive me.

“Abdoollah has again, on this occasion, furnished ample proofs of how justly he deserves the encomiums you were pleased, but yesterday, to bestow upon him. Shabash! he has saved my son!—saved him, I say,—my dearest, ever much-beloved Rustum!—Were you present?—did you listen to that portion of the narrative, when he dashed in, with all the vigour of his youthful days, and, with the first blow, did real execution? It is so like him, I cannot help pondering upon it,—he was always a dashing character,—could take a blow well, and seldom failed to return it twofold. I am all impatience to behold him again,—when may I reasonably expect them, Rustum?—I hope speedily; and as soon as he comes, I will make amends for the unjust suspicions I have entertained, to the prejudice of his noble character, which, indeed, after what I have seen, I ought never to have doubted. But passion always overcomes me, or a moment’s reflection would have quieted my fears, and ensured

his pardon. *Neemuck hullalee!** that he is,—what dæmon could have poisoned my mind against him? unless it was that inherent irritation I possess, to my cost. Believe me, that the joy a bride experiences at the first coming of her bridegroom, cannot exceed the rapturous feelings of delight, his presence, at this moment, would yield me.

“I can assure you, Noorumbie, much as I love you, and sincerely as I deplore the loss of him, to whom you were betrothed, that if your husband had come hither, clothed in all the pageantry of his wedding garments, seated on a richly caparisoned horse, and preceded with instrumental music, to claim you as his wife, he would have weighed light in the scale of my admiration, when compared with the aged Abdoollah, clad in the simple attire of his devoted servitude. Garments, I say, which he has not yet lived long enough to throw aside.”

“But, my dear father,” I, interrupting him, added, (hoping thereby to moderate his vehe-

* *Neemuck hullalee*.—Faithful to his salt.

mence) “allow me to submit, for your consideration, an explanation of the reasons which actuated me, in my unguarded moments, to quit my home, as I cannot rest satisfied until I have made you some amends for the anxiety I have caused you, and, by a timely repentance, regained the high place in your estimation, which I should ever wish to merit. Pray hear me.”

“No, I will not, boy! No excuses for me!—they always tend rather to aggravate me, than otherwise. As you are now able to defend yourself, go where and whither your will inclineth you. My duty towards you, in a measure, has ceased,—age cripples my arm in your behalf,—whilst young as you are, it only tends to nerve yours, and thus you gain by the measure. What care I, now, for the reason of your going away, when you have returned? may God be praised, after signalizing yourself,—only let me always beg of you to meet adversity and the hour of trial, with a becoming courage, worthy of, and characteristic of, your high birth. Do not in this, I say, degenerate, but be firm and dauntless, in proportion as it is requisite. Why should

I control your actions, when your youthful blood burns with appropriate ardour, and mine, now slumbering in my veins, would urge me rather to seek reconciliation, than revenge?—not I, indeed! I well remember how I myself always opposed an unbending, aye, rigorous contradiction to all the wishes of my parents, when they tended to keep me incessantly at home, pondering over the Koran. No, I say, no more care for me; Shabash, my mind is set at rest on this point, for better counsellors you cannot have, than those, who, like your late companions, will support you with their swords; and to their guidance I would have you commit yourself. Enough! enough! The past is forgotten and forgiven; and God be praised you are here, to listen to my confession, although, at any other moment, perhaps, I should, from pride, have delayed it. Tell the fakeer, when next you see him, that he shall henceforth find every protection under the shelter of my gratitude, (and it is a roof capable of sheltering him from every blast of power or oppression,) and be numbered with the inmates of my court-yard, if he deigns to accept such an offer.

By Allah ! you may add, I shall be proud to see him smoking his pipe under the banyan tree, or stretched at his length, in the verandah of my house, sleeping away a fit of intoxication, for I well know he indulges, a little more than is consistent with the tenets of our Holy Faith. But, boy, where is your wound ! I am forgetting that, whilst I continue my phrenzy, and indulge my loquacity, which may yet, but God forbid it ! check my brightest joys.”

“ There is little room for fear, on my account,” I replied. “ The wound I have received is by no means so severe, as your affectionate fondness multiplies it, by anxiety, into, and modesty almost forbids my showing it before such an assembly. But I yield to your entreaties, as you are so anxious about me : here it is,—a mere scratch in my opinion.” Having drawn my pugrie off my head, I displayed, to the astonishment and dismay of all around, a very unseemly looking cut, of considerable length, but which had scarcely penetrated through the skin, in some parts. This was a fitting opportunity for a fresh display of lamentation, but my father checked it as it commenced.

"I have certainly seen many worse cuts than this," said the kind old man, after he had examined it most minutely ; "but yet I shall not be easy, until my old friend the Bhat has seen it. Where can he be? I think I sent for him, if I mistake not ; but really, I was so bewildered, I knew not what I did." A servant, at this moment, entered the place where we were standing, and having pushed aside the idle, gazing female attendants, to make way for himself, paid his obeisance to my father, and represented that he had failed in gaining any knowledge of where to find the Bhat, but that, he had discovered by chance, in the village Serai, an aged Mahommedan.

"And what does he resemble in appearance, may I ask," quickly retorted my parent. "Has he any thing of the sage about him, or the knowing look of a Huckeem. If so, why have you not brought him? he might have been useful."

"This I was aware of," said the servant ; "he much resembles a Calundar, and I am aware how clever such folks are. I therefore, (although your slave) took the liberty of explaining to him, most fully, the particulars of my kind and generous

lord's anxiety. He has, I am happy to say, promised to accompany me back, (if you wish it, and will deign to let his footsteps reach this dwelling,) assuring me, at the same time, that he is well acquainted with the art of healing. His name I have also obtained, and the stranger is Dervesh Shaik Allee; but whether a Dervesh in reality or not, your slave cannot take upon himself to say." Every one now descended in haste, to the hall, in the lower story of the house, to meet this reverend man: the highest expectation reigned in every breast. The servant left us, as soon as he had obtained permission so to do, and shortly after returned, preceded by the stranger; to whom he served as guide, as far as the steps leading up to the outer verandah; whither my father had posted him in advance, to welcome him in. The rest of the household he had so arranged, as to have an imposing effect; that nothing of his dignity and respectability might be lost in the eye of his visitor. "Peace be with this house," said the Dervesh, as he ascended the steps; "peace be with the inmates of this habitation," he repeated aloud. My father em-

braced him, and taking his hand, ushered him into the hall, with all due ceremony.

Few, indeed, during my life-time, have been the opportunities, when, I have enjoyed a similar pleasure, in gazing upon a manly form like his, as I have seldom seen his equal since; in stature, he was beyond the ordinary height, and for so tall a man remarkably athletic; which he seemed desirous to improve, by assuming the most erect position he could maintain, in moving. His step was slow, but firm, and his paces measured out with confidence and precision. His appearance altogether, most commanding. There was something placid about his look, although his weather-beaten countenance, had somewhat of asperity delineated in his sharp and haggard features, which presented, at a side view, the boldest outline imaginable. His hair black as the finest soormah,* (used by females in dying their eyelids,) was profusely covered with oil, and escaped from under a small parti-coloured conical cap, flowing in rich profusion over his back. In his head-dress, which

* *Soormah*.—Antimony.

consisted of matted coir rope,† wound round the base of the cap, in a double fold, were fixed porcupine quills, and feathers of the ostrich and peacock. A tiger's skin bound across the chest with leather strips, hung suspended from his shoulders; whilst his waist was enveloped with a green cloth, which extended as far as his knees. His eyes were extremely small, and sunken in his face, almost hidden, in the rough projecting features of his countenance, but seemed replete with energetic fire, and keen power of observation; whilst the chief ornament of his chin was displayed in an unusually prolific growth of beard, the hairs of which were white as snow, at the roots, but of dirty pale yellow at the extremity; having doubtless, been destroyed by the too frequent use of dye. His feet were bare, and in his right hand he carried a small wand; at one end of which was affixed an ostrich's egg. Such did he appear to me as he entered the room. The whole assembly standing, drawn up in two

† *Coir rope*.—Made from the fibrous portions of the cocoa-nut bark.

lines, on either side of the room, bowed in compliment, and touched the floor, first with their hands, raising them afterwards to their foreheads, as a token of respect to this holy man, who now was nearly advanced as far as the cushions (which were placed at the further end, for the accommodation of those who honoured our humble dwelling with their presence,) without deigning even to give us a glance of approbation, in return for our civility. He seemed unbending in his haughty demeanour, or rather, he studied to inspire us with that awe, and veneration for his character, which his mysterious manner and overbearing conduct was well calculated to give rise to, in our estimation. Having seated himself, he began at length, to make some inquiries from my father, in a whisper, as to the reason which had actuated him to send a messenger abroad at that hour of night, in quest of aid. "What misfortune has suddenly overtaken you," he continued, exalting his voice by degrees, "which needs the assistance of Dervesh Shaik Allee, the renowned, both in the city and the desert, to remove? What thirsting traveller

requires the water of life to support him? Command his services, and he will intercede with him, (whose bountiful mercy ought to attract the adoration of all true believers to himself alone,) soliciting him to soften down or remove your calamities; and may he deign to change the present dark hour of adversity into one more brilliant, illumined with the sunshine of returning happiness. Be brief, for I must ere long, depart. My time is not my own. The unfortunate in this world are to be met with at each instant; so that they, whose profession it is to administer both to the mind and body, are fully employed."

"I ask your condescension," rejoined my father, "in curing my son of this wound, received in an attack of some Bheels, whilst at prayer, this morning."

Waving his wand once round the circle we had formed on seating ourselves, he exclaimed, whilst his countenance brightened up to an almost supernatural fervour, "Nothing is or can be hidden from the knowledge of him whom prayer and fasting have rendered acceptable in the

eyes of Allah ; who, in return, gifts him with more than human foresight, or else I should not have been here. His will be done. I knew it was to be so. It happened, did it not, near the tomb of the blessed Shah Alum, at Butwah, where he is enshrined as a saint, and which hourly echoes to the prayer of religious inspiration. And you had companions who rescued you in the hour of need : had you not, my son," he said, fixing his keen and scrutinizing glance upon my person, in order to make it understood, how well he knew whom he was addressing. "And those who sought your life have paid the forfeit of their crime with death, if Dervesh Shaik Allee mistakes not, which shall ever be the case with those, who would seize upon the unguarded posture of his absorption in prayer,—to practice a wrong upon their neighbour."

Overcome with astonishment, and fully expecting the Dervesh would make mention of the moollahs, which I had every anxiety to prevent, I remained mute, until a burst of authoritative language on his part, in again putting his questions, made me start with affright, lest I should

kindle his wrath, which, from outward appearance, might reasonably be expected to be most violent, and then I could not answer for what might ensue. I faintly articulated, "Your infinite wisdom speaks the words of truth."

"Then hear further," he rejoined, "Shaik Allee, gifted with reason, ever has, and ever will, speak the truth, and yet he knows how to temper his communications with prudence, so as not to destroy the hopes entertained by others. Review the past, my son; analyse your desires; and would too much candour on my part accord with your sentiments? But hear me with attention, and put your trust in my words.

"The offended Father of us all, has, in his justice, ordained severe trials to him who is now seeking revenge for base designs, and fostering an uncontrolled hatred against those who have devised them. I surely do not err in stating that of the one alluded to,—moreover would he not wish to command secrecy by feigning, and so let it be. Dervish Shaik Allee, although competent to the task, has preserved, and will preserve, an unbroken silence upon these points.

But, in so doing, let an implicit obedience to his commands mark the conduct of him he would watch over.”

Overjoyed at what I immediately drew in conclusion, from the words of his speech, and desirous of ensuring his good will, by promising to obey him upon all occasions, I was on the verge of making a reply, and also of putting a few questions to the old man, which might elucidate how he became acquainted with all my actions; he, however, instantly deciphering my thought, darkened the expression of his face with a deep frown, which at once deterred me from putting my intention into execution, and added a scowl to his haggard features beyond the power of description. Having thus silenced me at once, he again resumed his speech, and added: “Be careful, young man, you are as yet untried in the world, and cannot boast of that experience which I have gained during my pilgrimage through life, and which, doubtless, will suffice to guide me onwards in the path of mortality, with safety to myself and benefit to others. You have yet to learn that all those, whose situation in life

demands it, and who would enjoy a secret, ought never to reveal their intentions to any living soul ; for man is ordained to be often betrayed in his way through this world. Remember this !

“ As the Gilt Bangle* may be made to represent one of pure gold in appearance, so the first sight of him, who professes to be a friend, may tend to convince you he is so ; but try them both by a proper test, and it is hardly fair to suppose they can pass through the ordeal without proving false : therefore beware. Let no one, however, venture to ask any farther instruction from me, but as regards the treatment of this wound ; for fate has denied me any more knowledge than what I have revealed, without enjoining secrecy therewith ; and even Dervesh Shaik Allee, invested with power as he is, cannot oppose such authority with disobedience.” After a moment’s pause, he continued, “ Draw near, my son, that I may examine the hurt you have received.” I did so. He appeared well satisfied with the result of his ex-

* *Bangle*.—An ornament worn by Indians around the wrist.

amination, and ejaculated, "Insh-Allah,* it is indeed a very simple wound, and shall occupy but little of my attention or labour to ensure its certain cure."

"I can proceed no farther," continued the narrator; "Yah Khodah! Mahomed, bring me some sherbet, I can scarcely articulate. My tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth, and I pant for something to drink, like an antelope, who has at every turn encountered the eye of the tiger, who has been following him, and has, therefore, been forced to pass over stream after stream at a bound, without slaking his thirst, although exhausted with the hurry of his flight.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "even the delicious wines of Shiraz, so celebrated as delightful to the palate, and cooling to the body, cannot exceed the beverage I have drained from this cup. Khoda Afiz—farewell. No, Saheb, I cannot touch the pan to night; it were needless to attempt it. Salaam!"—and he retired; nor was I long in composing myself.

* *Insh-Allah*.—God be praised.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MAHOMMEDAN'S STORY.

(*Night the Sixth.*)

“ Every day a severe fever hangs on my body,
“ And at night, slumber flies from my eyelids.”—*Türki.*

“ Keep thyself far away from all forbidden enjoyments,
“ Cleanse thyself from all thy sins.”—*Persian.*

So many nights of the narrative had been happily completed; but, I must confess, such late hours as I had been forced to keep, had made me feel rather unwell. I, therefore, ordered Urjun, who was my factotum, to replace my gun in its case, as soon as he had cleaned it, as I would not go out shooting. Luckily, the tapaul* brought me a letter from Europe, which furnished

* *Tapaul.*—Post.

materials for my contemplation, whilst I reclined upon my sofa, during mid-day, anxiously awaiting the coming on of the evening, when I might indulge myself with a ride through the city, I was not at all satisfied with my feelings,—chills crept over my body, and an overpowering lassitude, accompanied with pains in my joints, made me anticipate a fever. The exercise which I took at sunset, however, relieved me so much, that I continued my ride beyond my usual distance; and, on my return, found the moonshee and Mahommedan awaiting my arrival.

“I should not have come,” ejaculated the latter, “had I not promised, Saheb; for, I can assure you, the free use I have made of my tongue of late, threatens to do me an injury; but still I will continue, for an hour or so, my narrative.”—And then he re-commenced in these words:

“Thanks be to God, and the Holy Prophet,” ejaculated my father, with all that warmth and energy peculiar to his character, and which was again awakened by the assurance of the dervesh, “and may Khodah grant that the wound, as you predict, may prove of no fatal consequence. I

could ill brook to see my son, after the years of care I have bestowed upon him, which have been crowned with success, hurt, in the pride of his youth, by the hand of an assassin! For the only consolation I have now left, when fast falling into decay, is to behold my children shooting up into the luxuriance of life, gifted with vigour, and endowed with reason. If nothing unfavourable occurs, in the meantime, I vow, that on the day my son shall enjoy the refreshing bath of health, the whole village shall be fed on rice and pillao, lengthened with sweetmeats; yes, every hungred shall be well fed, and those who are accustomed to luxury, shall know a day of pleasure at my expense. Step forward, my worthy friend, in the hour of necessity, I beseech you, calm a father's troubled mind," he said, addressing the stranger, "by trying the efficacy of your healing art upon my son. Display your utmost talent and ability upon this occasion, for the result is to me, as the sunnud* of the cazi,† with whom the offender's

* *Sunnud*.—Decree, order, or verdict. † *Cazi*.—Judge.

life is left to be disposed of as he commands. Believe me, I am not one who desires to see the labourer toil for nothing, or to profit by another's experience at no cost; and depend upon it, be the result of your endeavours what it may, you shall not lack a reward. Gold I have yet a little of, and, I dare say, it will not be withheld, when the interests of my son demand its liberal distribution. No! by no means; and were I to relinquish my dwelling and to subsist upon charity, you should nevertheless have your pains requited."

"I want neither gold nor praise," said the stranger, in a tone denoting how truly he was offended at my father's offer. "I am not to be purchased by another! If my duty, as a Mahomedan, did not prompt me to be charitable, then your proffer of wealth might be acceptable,—but it is otherwise. Riches are to me, as is the surface of the earth to the cultivator, only esteemed in proportion as it can conduce to the benefit of the possessor, and how can they do so in my case? In the midst of jungles, whose impervious nature, harbours and conceals those whose livelihood is plunder, is wealth a good companion? No!

and in such I often dwell, for I am a wanderer. Again, I have not a family to burthen me with anxiety, and therefore need not more than my daily bread to support me, and such I have never failed yet to obtain, at the hands of those whom chance enables me to benefit. I want not retinues or costly residences, to render me contented with my lot, or I should be unworthy to fulfil the happy situation of one of the chosen, in the next world, which I aspire to. Keep your money,—nay, do not mention it again to me, unless you wish to drive me from your door. It is not for Shaik Allee to receive such a boon!—and of his actions, and the reward they merit, leave the All-merciful Allah to judge! I will try what I can effect, with pleasure; and if I can dry the tears of a father, or relieve his burthened heart, the joy I shall experience will amply compensate me for the present. Approach nearer to me, my son.”

I instantly obeyed.

Taking from his cummerband* a small box

* *Cummerband*.—Is the term for a cloth which is girt about the loins by all classes of Indians. Some are of

made of antelopes' horn, and which was inclosed in a paper wrapper, closely written over, with all sorts of mystical figures, perfectly unintelligible to me, he first muttered them over, and then demanded a piece of unbleached linen, to serve as a bandage to bind up my wound with. This being furnished, he spread some salve taken from the inside of the box upon a portion of it, and pronouncing "Ulhumdulillah" in a loud voice, applied it to the gash, pressing the sides together with one hand, as he wound the length of the cloth in folds round my head with the other. "This salve is the fruits of my study under the far-famed HuckleemBaba, Nowsherwan of Arabia," he remarked to me, "and may it prove as beneficial to you, as it always has done to others, even in cases of extreme severity.

"With the assistance of Allah, and a little rest, your son will be recovered in a short time,

very costly texture, but a shawl is generally preferred. The Scripture mentions frequently, "Girt up his loins." The natives of India, on all occasions, adopt this usage, whether proceeding on a journey, carrying a weight, or preparing to perform any feat of strength.

my brother," he said to my father—"but be not impatient. The hand of power is sometimes the slower, that it may be the surer. Let the patient alone; follow, and guide me to the outer door of the court-yard!" he exclaimed, in an authoritative tone, as he arose from the cushion he had been reclining upon.—"I must depart, for I have tarried longer than I intended—such is my request, and let it be immediately complied with—for I can brook no delay."

Trembling with fear, I arose, and at my father's desire followed the dervesh down the steps of our humble dwelling. Having passed over the outer threshold of the inclosure, he seized me suddenly by the arm, cautioned me against fear, as he perceived me shudder under his grasp, and thus addressed me :

"I am old, and recollect, my son, the voice of the sage ought never to be disregarded. Beware, young man, how you proceed in the weighty matters you are engaged in. I know them all. My eye has seen, what my foresight enabled me to circumvent, when the hour of danger closed around you. Let virtue be your guide; in it

place your dependance, weigh each action of your life, either performed or intended, in the scale of propriety, and ascertain how far it is likely to prove beneficial, either to yourself, or others. Indulge not too freely the appetite for revenge you are now eager to satisfy to the utmost extent—for as the body is liable to be injured from the effects of excess in any one particular, so is the mind. Of what avail is the understanding, when passionate perseverance in one fond object, or desire is allowed too much latitude over mental energy. May it not cause a derangement of the whole system of our thoughts, and lead us to commit that, which may be hurtful to our feelings in the end, or when attained to may appal the senses? Reflect upon what I say. Beware, I repeat, lest your actions in the difficult task you are now engaged in, should take the form of oppression. Justice may oft be rendered too strictly, and then it is, that the merciful disposition of man, stamps it with the foul name of tyranny. Be kind, considerate, and lenient to others, in the same proportion as you would desire them to be to you, and as circumstances will justly permit.

But let me caution you. Above all, abstain from countenancing unrestrained the maddening passion of a first love, which now fires your brain. You are astonished, perhaps, to hear me speak thus, but I know your inmost thoughts. Remember, there is the sacred tie of our forefathers, in the ceremony of marriage, which ought ever to be respected, and which, let me warn you, no man can unloose without incurring the penalty of sorrowing with a stricken conscience. Age, and incipient infirmity, will always tame the heart of man, so that the most depraved libertine, if spared sufficiently long to feel his power paralysed, will seek repentance. When once, a woman becomes the acknowledged bride of another, nothing ought ever to disturb the honour of the husband, or the chastity of his wife. But this world is full of sin, and man, although gifted with reason, seldom knows its proper use. Beware how you proceed, as regards the lovely being who has enchained your affections, and whom the guilt of the moollahs alone prevented your having an interview with. In this, was the almighty hand of power, stretched forth to pre-

vent harm, and to give you time for reflection when absent from her. Use it in proving the purity of your intentions. You may have it in your power to render her happiness unalloyed, but not, if sin has the direction of your actions, —and, mark me! a single impetuous action, employed to obtain her unfairly, may, in after life, not only bring misery upon yourself, but place her before your eyes the victim of remorse.

“ Well hath the sage said, whose body is enshrined in the tomb you were attacked in, that to taste the living waters of unalloyed happiness, you must first search for the spring of virtue. The poison of the mind is vice, and in the temporary gratification of our passions, we may be led to deem it a pleasing one; but it assimilates itself to that which is hurtful to the body, although gratifying to the palate, deadly in its effects when freely indulged in.

“ If she should leave others to attach herself to your interests, opposing herself to the laws of God and man, and disregarding the advice of her parents, may she not, afterwards, feel the pangs of remorse; and can she view in yourself the

cause of all her sorrow, without its alloying your mutual happiness? Remember! be these, the words of Dervesh Shaik Allee, ever present in your memory, and fail not to observe their meaning. He can see far into the obscurity of the future, and his language is ever spared, but when he sees the necessity of using it. Adieu, young man; never open your lips to your father, on the subject of this conversation, for he cannot give you a brighter light, to guide your way than I can. Follow my torch, and you will never stumble. Secrecy, however, I need scarcely enjoin; adieu," and he instantly vanished from my sight.

Stupified with astonishment, I kept my gaze fixed upon the spot where, but a moment before, he had stood. I required a pause, to enable me to collect my wandering thoughts, and this served as one. Resuming as much as possible, my usual manner, I turned round, and soon regained the hall. Here the assembled household, (whose curiosity once excited, was not again easily allayed) tarried in a state of breathless anxiety, eager to gain some particulars regarding the mysterious individual, who had so suddenly, and

in such a peremptory manner, requested me to follow him, without any explanation of what he wished to communicate ; “ and yet our master,” said one, “ permitted his son to go,—although heretofore, this man has been unknown to the family.” I lingered for a while, before I entered, as one does, who, although worked upon by the excitement of his feelings, yet dreads to commit that act which they would prompt him to do. In the mean time, I heard my father addressing the company.

“ His features,” said he, “ somewhat resemble those of Abraham Ben Sadi ; who, in former days, was not unknown to me. But yet, I might mistake him at first sight, if I met him ; for many years have passed away, since we became acquainted. If it is him, I am at a loss to conjecture what reason he can have for adopting any disguise in coming to my house, where, if I recollect rightly, he has often partaken of the repast of welcome, seasoned with sincerity : let him be who he may, he is an odd sort of man—for his manners are so abrupt. All is command, with him, at one moment ; and his requests are made

in a manner, ill suited upon any other occasion, to entice me to grant them ; for, in truth, with all their knowledge, these Derveshes are often better calculated to preach, than to practise themselves, what they would have others do. And then, again, I have learnt during my life, to make a difference between the garb of appearance, and the wearer of it. But what has completely staggered me, is this :— he repeatedly made allusions in his pompous address, which, it strikes me, were not misunderstood by Rustum Khan ; and to what can they portend—unless it was to him. I do not know to whom he could be addressing his language about revenge—secrecy—and feigning : for, if I thought he meant the latter as applicable to myself, I would soon undeceive him, in giving him a bastinadoing most openly. He appears to know more about the affairs of my son, than I do, or that will, if he meddles with them, suit the somewhat irascible temper of my boy.

“ As for myself, I am sure I shall never trouble my mind with any concern about him, as long as he is permitted to remain in safety. But on his return, I will find it all out ; he is too young,

yet, to deceive me, whose beard and experience have alike increased with years. No, no, I'll sift him."

At this particular juncture, I entered the room in haste, and threw myself down upon the cushions, as if overcome with fatigue, and was instantly assailed with questions from all parties, regarding the purpose for which the Dervesh had bade me follow him.

"It was only to warn me against exposing myself, until my wound had healed," I replied, in a subdued voice, and indifferent manner.

"Then I should hope, your confinement will not be very long," said my father.

"God forbid it," replied the others, whilst one and all, again reverted to the subject of what had occurred between the stranger and myself.

"Above all, he has recommended my immediately retiring to rest," I replied, "lest, what with fatigue, and the weak state he says I am reduced to, fever should ensue."

"Thanks to the Dervesh," ejaculated my father, "it is quite sufficient to convince me, let us no

longer delay ; and you can give me the information I wish, at another time. Now to rest, one and all. Where the intention is fraught with advantage, let not the advice be disregarded. I admire that Dervesh,—he seems so very interested in the welfare of my son : it is past my understanding ; but no matter. Rest must, in truth, be necessary for your recovery, that I am convinced of ; therefore, you domestics, retreat to your accustomed places of repose, at once. What, do you hesitate ? are your limbs palsied, or your minds unwilling ? You ought to have discovered, ere this, that I am not to be trifled with. Do you hear me, or has curiosity deafened you ? Begone, I say, and let only one, as heretofore, be stationed in the verandah, since my son, may Allah be praised, has returned to me ; and let no one, on the peril of losing his right ear, and suffering the bastinado, think of disturbing any portion of my family, until near mid-day ; for we have had a most trying time of it. Here, Rustum, and Noorumbie, come hither.”

We approached.—The old man warmly embraced us ; the servants moved off—and ere long,

the scene of tumult, riot, and confusion, which had given place to the more pleasing impression of my father's display of parental affection, was yet farther soothed down, by the stillness which reigned throughout the building.

In thus endeavouring to explain to you, the circumstances attendant on my first visit to Ahmedabad, continued the narrator, "I cannot but entertain an idea, that I fall short in my description of them; and perhaps, they fail in exciting that interest with my auditors, which can recompense them, for hours spent in my company. If so, you must excuse me. You must make every allowance for me, and consider the length of time which has elapsed, since their occurrence. How opposite, our manners and customs are, to your own. You must, then, in justice, duly weigh the difference between early impressions, and the shadows reflected upon the memory by them, in the more advanced periods of life, when feverish excitements, and impassioned feelings are alike subdued."

Although the events of the early part of the day, on which I returned to my father's dwelling,

had ended only in disappointment, augmented by the eagerness of an enthusiastic and youthful spirit, to obtain the object of its desires,—nevertheless, it was all counter-balanced, in the unexpected and fortuitous manner, by which, a reconciliation with my father, had been effected. And then, again, the words of the Dervesh, to whom I allotted a super-human knowledge of the past and the future, lent a consolation to my drooping spirits, in the emphatic manner in which he had assured me, that it might rest in my power to render the object of my affections happy. My mind, eased of one portion of its former anxiety, now reverted with two-fold strength, to the remaining one, which seemed to sink yet deeper, into my soul, in proportion as the scale, in which the weights remain, do, when the equal measure has been removed from the other. Devoted to her, whom chance had denied me an interview with, my heart burnt with impatience, and I longed to see her, to assure her of my affection. How, then, could my youthful passion believe, for a moment, that I could be guilty of any impetuous action,—which in en-

dangering the happiness of her I so much adored, must prove equally fatal to my own comfort. No, that part of the Dervesh's warning speech, I at once deemed inapplicable to myself; whilst self-pride aided the expostulations of the Dervesh, in convincing me that it was needless to look to any other source, when, to be truly happy, man must be equally virtuous. That the purest intention of rectitude should be my only monitor, and characterize my interview with the fair hourie, whose generous intercession in my behalf, had spared me the torment of the bastinado, was as quickly resolved on, as the idea of its being necessary, was entertained.

Dozing and waking by turns, I continued during the night the fatigues of the day, for I had no such slumber as can refresh either the mind or the body, as the former yet continued a prey to painful and conflicting emotions, and the latter was a martyr to cramps and pains. Overcome, at length, with the enervating exertions of my long march, and sharp conflict during the day, I yielded to an overpowering lassitude, and fell into a lengthened sleep, from which I was

not awakened until past mid-day, as my father's injunctions were seldom disregarded by his domestics. Yah Khodah, Saheb, what did I not suffer all this time. I was disturbed by the dreams conjured up for me to gaze upon, by the fretful excitement of my imagination. It was in vain I turned to the right or left, to avoid a harrowing spectacle of misery which uprose before me, for I could not fly from what was so closely connected with myself.

Again was I attacked ; once more was Allah Acbar, pronounced in the highest tone that human endeavours can command, at the moment of distress. My scymetar gleamed aloft, and my enthusiasm was at its highest pitch. Then came blow upon blow, clashing upon the well-timed guard I offered. Now Khan Mahomed Jung's household were hurrying before me. Then came a yell of despair, succeeded by a scream for help.

Rushing to a distant spot, leaping over nullahs, and exerting myself to the utmost, I then beheld Moollah Hachim endeavouring to overcome the resistance of a female, who held fast by the pendant suckers of a Banyan tree. An indivi-

dual, who was standing close by, kept pointing to a wound he had received in her defence. His look was terrific,—his eye was phrenzy-stricken,—tears of anguish stole down his aged cheek,—his limbs shook beneath him, and soon he fell a stiffened corpse! She again, the image of affright, continued to claim my protection. I stood within the compass of a tiger's spring from the spot. My arm was raised aloft to avenge her; my shining sword glittered in the moonbeam, which cast its silvery light over this imaginary landscape. Oh! I can well remember all the horrors I experienced during this night; I can never forget, or justly describe them. The sharpened steel waited but for an impulse from my muscular arm, which seemed nerved with hatred and revenge, to fall upon the miscreant: and yet, alas, my strength failed me! It seemed as if some fiend had brought me to the spot to witness what I could not hinder, and bid me feast upon my irritated feelings, maddened with despair. As I continued to gaze upon this scene, the female turned, and, could it be possible!—could I credit my eye-sight?—it was her I loved! Her eyes

cast an imploring look upon me, as they scanned my features. She spoke :—I heard the sounds familiar to my ear, loud in appeal for help ! This urged me to renew my efforts. I wrestled against my fate ; kicked, stamped, swore, and raved ; called on Allah for his assistance, to break the spell which bound me. But no, naught could I effect. I was enchained as it were to the spot with fetters, past my strength to break ; and, of all the senses of my body, sight, apparently, alone remained to me.

“ Oh, Rustum,” she now exclaimed, “ and have you deceived me too, and thus refuse to advance to my aid ? Is it for this that I have reposed the confidence of love with you ? No !” she ejaculated, accompanying her negative with vehement gestures of reproof. “ You yet tarry, do you ; and your voice returns no answer. Avaunt, I say then, avaunt !” and, with a scornful look at me, she threw herself into the embrace of Moollah Hachim, and exultingly exclaimed, “ I am free !—I am free ! and accept your proposals !” Now was I hurried into the midst of a tumultuous crowd assembled around the house of Murdan Khan, where

Moollah Ibrahim had received his just reward in an untimely end ! Oh, how I exulted ! My heart was warmed with joy : I drew my dirk, and stabbed his lifeless body over and over again ! And now, believe me, the image of her I adored cheated my sight, and kept up an incessant flight before my gaze, pursued first by one and then another, whilst I remained rooted to the spot my fancy had assigned me.

At last I succeeded in my efforts to speak. "Yah Ulahi, I have you now !" burst into utterance, as I fancied I had grasped Moollah Hachim ; and then this disturbed and soul-harrowing dream instantly quitted me.

When I awoke, my limbs were trembling,—my whole body shook with convulsions,—my eyes burned within their sockets, and a cold perspiration stood in drops upon my brow. It was some time before I could understand what had befallen me. I was at a loss to conjecture what had so completely overcome my usual energy. Now suffering from an excess of heat, which threatened to stifle me in its oppression, I threw myself again upon the couch I had but a moment

before quitted. In that recumbent posture, I was seized with cramps, chills, and endless shiverings. I need scarcely add, all this was produced by the first effects of a violent fever, which began to exert its baneful influence over my mental as well as corporeal energies, and which, when at its highest, threatened to falsify the prediction of the Dervesh, and overpower my youthful constitution.

The Dervesh, in his second visit to me, did not fail to remark the severity of my case, and continued his attendance for several days, until at length, the fever having abated, and my strength beginning to return, which, at one time, could scarcely have been expected, he took his leave of me, (having performed what the whole household deemed a most wonderful cure) in the most kind and affectionate manner. And I believe I may assert, that the rumour of his skill was spread throughout the village before his departure was known; for the servants hastened to the Bazaar on every frivolous occasion. Yet, although he was so constantly at our dwelling,—so much the topic of

conversation with all, and my father had caused every inquiry to be prosecuted, which could lead to some knowledge, of whom this singular character was—nothing transpired. Not any thing could be summoned from the past, (by the ingenious fertility of expedient, which accompanies curiosity,) which gave the most remote clue, as to whom the person was, who had thus unexpectedly befriended me, and with whom gold was not allowed to have any sway. This, combined with the singular manner in which he had divined my most secret thoughts,—the open and frank nature of his advice, and the impressive tone with which he commanded me to be cautious, and prudent in my conduct on particular points, tended much to confirm my former idea, of his being supernaturally gifted, with wisdom and foresight. At all events, if I was doubtful how far he could anticipate the future, I was forced to acknowledge how accurately he described the past. The fakeer even was unacquainted with my first love, and so was Abdoollah; and yet a mysterious being, hitherto unknown to me, and whom

I had never seen, before the evening of my return home, had apparently the fullest insight into the particular situation I was placed in.

Having once adopted this high-wrought opinion of the Dervesh, and invested him with two of the most distinguishing attributes of Allah, my mind, again and again, recurred to his conversation. As yet, I had not lost the recollection of a single word, so that the most emphatic part of his discourse, which had represented so vividly the sacred nature of the ties of conjugal union, incessantly claimed my attention. He must, I reflected, have some reason for being so importunate in this particular—that it therefore behoved me to pause before I act,—as his knowledge of the future must portray to his mind the necessity of thus cautioning me, otherwise, why should he, disinterested as he must be, do so? I now took this into my consideration, as likely to occur,—now pondered over that which might be baneful,—but could come to no conclusion as to what I was most likely to err in.

That she must either be intended for another, would occur to my mind, or, my obtaining her,

was to be a curse to me, I imagined, and if so, what could I hope to effect against fate? Nevertheless, I determined, at all hazards, to frustrate the father's will, if it consigned her happiness to my uncle's guardianship, for I knew I possessed her love; that she adored me,—and why should I permit another, was my argument, to wrest from her the guidance of her affections? Continuing this train of thought, my mind fretted with anxiety, rendered my nights devoid of rest. Whether the noon-day's glaring sunshine, or the pale rays of the moonlight, shone into my chamber,—the same restlessness,—the same state of distrust haunted me. Working upon an emaciated frame, weakened by disease, my disorder was considerably protracted, although the assiduous attentions and endearing affection of my sister Noorumbie, tended much to alleviate my impatience at being thus confined to my room.

What can, I would ask of you, Saheb, exceed the pleasing attentions, which sisterly affection, when worked upon by the sufferings of a brother, will suggest? Can I compare, with the confidence

they impart to the mind of him, who is bound upon the bed of sickness, the pleasing draught taken from the fountain by the traveller in the desert, who, wearied and fatigued, has reached it with his last gasp? and whilst I would thus contrast the two, can I do justice to the excess of rapture imparted by either?—No, never! From my sister's kindness, I obtained such ease of mind, as would puzzle the most learned to divine. Her constant solicitude to learn the particulars of my stay at Ahmedabad, at last awakened me from my determined silence on this subject; and I believe I may date my recovery, from the time I disburthened my thoughts to her confiding bosom. The disclosure of the circumstances, eased my mind of the necessity of acting any longer a feigned part, whilst it gained me an affectionate confidant, with whom I could freely discuss the merits of my conduct, and the villainy of the moollahs. The kind and sincere manner in which she commiserated such an unhappy termination, as was the result of my hopes, lent a balm to my feelings, in the consolation it afforded. In this manner I opened a

channel, by which I could, when I wished it, drain off some portion of my inward sorrow.

With all the warmth of youthful innocence, and energy of female appeal, she would bid me strive to save one of her own sex from the situation of anguish and remorse, she felt certain, must fall to the lot of her on whom I had placed my affections, if not allowed to follow the bent of her own inclinations, in making choice of myself. What could better accord with the nature of my feelings, than such language, at such a time? Could any Huckleem have applied a medicine more likely to ensure the recovery of his patient, than that of my sister, whose advice promised to heal my wounded spirit?—No, never! I felt the impulse of active exertion renewed within me. The warning of the dervesh, to which my weakened understanding had lent an undue prophetic certainty, now lost its power, in proportion as I shook off disease and its effects. A new hope now came to cheer me on,—all was bright noon-day,—my intentions were as clear as the unclouded horizon,—and when I calmly reflected upon the necessity of shaking off my present

state of irresolution, in order to do justice to my beloved, I fortified my mind against all sinister foreboding. Day after day, a new accession of health accrued to me; and ere twenty-five days had transpired, since I left the city of Ahmedabad, I performed the pleasurable task of indulging in the bath of health*, and was myself again.

Such was the finish of my sufferings, under the effects of the first severe illness I can recollect having had.

But as two watches of the night are past, I must request your permission, Saheb, to depart, as by the dawn, I must be prepared to repeat a prayer, in conformity with the customs established upon the injunctions of our Blessed

* *Bath of health.*—It must be understood, that whenever a native has been very sick, it is usual for him, on an appointed day, when he is sufficiently recovered to bear it, to take a bath, and this is called the “Bath of Health.” He then removes the wrapper bound across the head and tied under the chin, which is universally worn during illness.

Prophet, and in doing which, I reap an ample return in peace of mind."

"Granted, my friend," I rejoined, "for who would, for an instant, delay the devotion of another?"

The stranger rose, made his obeisance, and departed.

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